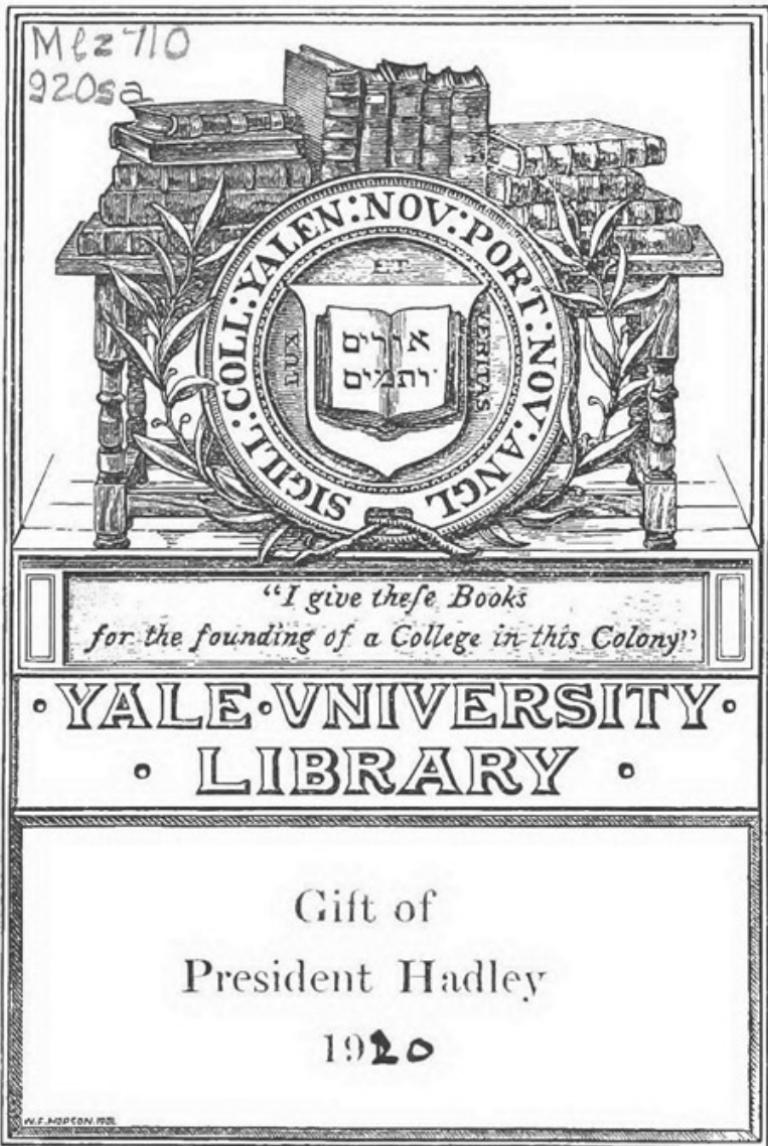


The
INNER MEANING OF
THE FOUR GOSPELS.

GILBERT T. SADLER, M.A., LL.B.

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1920

T H E
I N N E R
M E A N I N G
O F T H E
F O U R
G O S P E L S.

THE INNER MEANING OF THE FOUR GOSPELS

Re-interpreted in the Light of Modern Research,
and in Relation to Spiritual and Social Needs.

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LONDON: C. W. DANIEL, LTD.
Graham House, Tudor Street, E.C.4

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" All through life I see a Cross
Where sons of God yield up their breath :
There is no gain except by loss,
There is no life except by death :
There is no vision but by faith :
No glory but by bearing shame,
No justice but by taking blame :
And that Eternal Passion saith,
Be emptied of glory and right and name."

(Walter C. Smith.)

"Would'st thou love one who never died for thee, or ever die for One who had not died for thee? And if God dieth not for man, and give not Himself *eternally* for man, man could *not exist* : for as God is love, man is love : every kindness to another is a little death in the Divine Image."

(Wm. Blake in *Jerusalem*.)

" Except ye fast to the world ye shall in no wise find the kingdom of God."

(Words of Jesus in the First Oxyrhynchus Fragment.)

"One God in every seed self-sacrificed."

(Alfred Noyes,)

"Dare live by Truth-Love-Faith,
Thou struggling soul, and free :
Thus feel the Infinite
Self-crucified in thee!"

(G.T.S.)

FOREWORD.

THE attitude of this little book towards the Gospels may be briefly indicated. The Commentary will explain it in detail.

The present writer for years resisted the idea that there was no man Jesus. But by persistent examination of the stories concerning Jesus, it was borne in upon him that the old explanation of them was very unsatisfactory.

That the compilers of these four Gospels believed a man Jesus lived is no doubt true : but they used material which arose from an earlier gnostic, mystic circle, perhaps in Alexandria. In that circle, the "Christ" was a divine figure in Jewish minds, and he was set forth in "The Book of Enoch" (B.C.70) as One eternally with God. The Gnostics added the term and the Figure to their idea of the Logos or Primal Man, who had descended to earth, being "crucified" in so doing, and had risen to lift men to eternal life.

The Cross, to Gnostics, meant the boundary between the eternal and phenomenal : and in it the Son of God was fixed.

That picture was really the mystic or secret way of setting forth a process that is "ever" happening. But we can now see it was not a

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“second” divine Being who descended. God, the Infinite Life, ever descends or is crucified (self-limited) into this universe in order to evolve here souls as sons, so as to love them and be loved by them for ever. This is the meaning of Reality. This is the World-Religion of the future, greater even than Christianity, though suggested, or pointed to, by Christianity.

The Gnostics said the “Christ” was the same as their eternal “Logos” of God, the “Primal Man” of “Poimandres¹ (a gnostic book going back to a pagan, pre-Christian original). The “Christ” descended, died, and rose again to save men from sin and destruction. So said the Gnostic Christians about A.D. 30-80 in Alexandria and Ephesus.

Then the Churches (originally groups of the Christ-men, looking for Christ to come soon from the sky), not being able to grasp this gnostic philosophy, thought it meant “a” Man had come from heaven to earth, been crucified and risen. So they taught the mystic story as if it were a historical incarnation of the “Heavenly Man.”

(1) “To-day it is needful” to get “behind” the Four Gospels to the Gnostic idea of the Christ-Logos not as a man, but as a divine Life descending and ascending. Then we must get

(1) See my *The Gnostic Story of Jesus Christ*.

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to the real meaning of that Gnostic message that " it is the Infinite Life who is ever in this process of being crucified " into nature and finite souls (from protozoa to men), so as to save souls, i.e., achieve in them the Infinite Life, and so give Himself into them. That is the meaning of the deep fact that God is Love, life-sharingness. The universe exists that we may achieve His Life ! God is not a Father apart from men, sending once a Son of God from heaven to save men. That is but picture-theology. God is Crucified as Life-sharing Love. And man must also share his life with his fellow-men, and so be at one with God, the unifying Soul of the universe.

The real reason why ignorance, sin and pain exist in men's lives is because God is there as self-limited and hampered, in order to live in men ! God is imprisoned for us. Only as man achieves the spiritual powers does God work in and for man. But as man struggles to gain the spiritual life, more and more, he feels it is the crucified Infinite Life struggling in him, and ascending in him ! " Matter " is God's psychic states, organised will-energies, as a womb and school for souls, who are being evolved here. By pain, man learns the spiritual powers of God; and the result is worth the pain !

There are stages in the Path of souls towards realising the Infinite Life of the spirit. Souls

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pass through, and yet carry on into higher stages, the swoon-consciousness of plants, the sense-consciousness of animals, and the self-consciousness (the property-grasping life) of the natural man.

The Saviour is the Infinite Life (not a Son of God, but God Himself) as He-She is crucified into nature to arise in finite souls, who are thus transfigured and immortalised by an Infinite element !

The Gnostics, being dualists, placed the Supreme God outside the phenomenal world, as Plato did. Hence the descending God they called the "Logos." So Plato, in his "Timaeus," said the Son of God was set into the universe as a \times of circles (the same and the other, or the Eternal and the phenomenal united in a \times). Justin Martyr insisted (thrice) that this referred to the cross of Christ, and it no doubt was a precursor of the idea of "Christ crucified." (Apology 1.60.) We must now see that the universe exists (with all its sin and pain) as the process of God's life, "crucified" for us, that we may live in His spiritual joy and power.

(2) The World-Religion goes beyond Christianity of the Gospels in a second manner. Not only must we see that "Christ" is no man, and no mere second divine being (Logos), but is God Himself who "ever" is crucified to give His blessed life to us, but we must also "add to the

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spiritual powers" revealed in the New Testament so splendidly. The New Testament writers, following the early Christ-group of pious souls in Jerusalem, showed the three spiritual powers of humility, magnanimity (Matthew 5, 38—48), and purity (even in desire). These three powers are unveiled in the "Sermon on the Mount" and indeed throughout the New Testament. They are the flowers of the East. We need also the four flowers of the West, viz., Freedom (no subservience, as once in slaves and women), Reason (the cultivation of the sciences, and open-mindedness), the Imagination of Beauty (in the harmony of art, and of a new social ordering of human lives), and Service (active life-work for social good). The East and the West must meet! These seven spiritual powers of God in man are thus "more than the ideal called 'Christ'" in the New Testament. These seven "colours" fuse into the white Light of Life-sharing Love using Reason to create Beauty, which is the divine life, crucified into nature to ascend in free souls. All exists to that end: but the New Testament ideal, as unveiled in the wondrous passages, Matthew 5 and 6, I. Corinthians 12 and 13, Colossians 3, Romans 12, is not the whole of the Will Divine. The World-Religion needs to gather from the West (ancient Greek and modern Anglo-Saxon ideals) as well as from the East (Buddhist and Hebrew ideals).

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Thus the Christian ideas of divorce and almsgiving, the subservience of slaves and of wives (*Ephesians* 5, 22—24) are but temporary ones. We have now outgrown them. Slavery is not condemned in the New Testament as an institution, and though Philemon was told to be kind to Onesimus, he was not told to cease to be his master. Slaves were told to obey their masters, not to claim release as Sons of God ! The ideas of personal freedom and social service are Western rather than Eastern. Almsgiving creates paupers as we see on the steps of continental cathedrals. Each man should be a citizen with a right to maintenance, if “ willing ” to work, while health lasts. The New Testament is the most splendid contribution to the World-Religion, but not the whole of it. Thus, in both the ideas of God and man, in spiritual and in social life, the New Testament supplies a partial but not a complete World-Religion.

The present little book on the Gospels seeks to show (a) what the stories originally meant and (b) to indicate how nobly they contribute to the World-Religion of the Infinite crucified in the finite. The stories are descriptions of the life of God in the early Christ-group, and in men of love all over the world.

THE INNER MEANING OF THE FOUR GOSPELS.

FROM WHAT SOURCES WERE THE FOUR GOSPELS COMPILED?

THE Gospel of *Matthew*, briefly called Matthew, contains most of what is in Mark, and many Sayings of the Christ, called *Logia*. It seems to be clear that Matthew used an edition of Mark, and also a Collection of the sayings of Jesus, which Papias spoke of as *Logia*.¹ It has been supposed that Matthew used an enlarged edition of the *Logia*, and this has been called “Q”²: but it is sufficient to say that there were several editions of the *Logia*. The one used by Luke was a different one from that used by Matthew.

Mark used the *Logia* also, as in describing the parables of Jesus (4, 1—34), the sayings on the inner life (7, 1—23), and the teaching on the cross (8, 27—38). Mark also used a collection of “Messianic” texts from the Old Testament, which Dr. Rendel Harris calls *The Book of Testimonies*³ (see Luke 24, 27, 44). The sources of Mark were The Book of Messianic passages, the *Logia* and also a Mystery-book (on the initiation of a man to Christianity). This last was framed on the Mystery-religions, and gave rise to the stories of the baptism, temptation, crucifixion and resurrection. It contained short

(1) Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3, 39.

(2) J. Moffatt: *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*: pp. 200—202. The Passion story was not in the *Logia*.

(3) See Rendel Harris, *Testimonies*.

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scenes, as in a drama. *Luke* used *Mark* and the *Logia*, and has a special section (9, 51—18, 14) giving parables which are not in the other Gospels. Luke 1 and 2 were from a work of art on how the birth of the divine Son of God “must have been.” The Fourth Gospel (briefly called *John*, though not by the early Christian of that name, but emanating from a Johannine School at Ephesus or Alexandria) used *Mark* and *Matthew* and *Luke* apparently, and freely added discourses and stories, composed as spiritually helpful to Christians.

Mark, without the *Logia*, was originally a booklet of the stages of an Initiate into the Christian mystery.

These stages were twelve :

- (1)—The baptism (it is known the initiate was baptised as in all mysteries, Rom. 6, 1—10 : and the story of the baptism of Christ signified that of the Christian).
- (2)—The temptation (James 1, 1—13, 12—18).
- (3)—The contest against demons (recorded in the stories of Christ conquering the demons, a Gnostic conception of the Saviour).
- (4)—The transfiguration of the Christ.
- (5)—The anointing (or chrism : here the Passion-story begins with the story, in *Mark* 14, of the anointing).
- (6)—The supper (to “eat the God”).
- (7)—The loneliness in Gethsemane.

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- (8)—The claim to be the Christ (Mark 14, 62).
- (9)—The mocking (taken direct from the mystery-religions).
- (10)—The crucifixion (the initiate was tied to a X; see the *Acts of John*).
- (11)—The burial.
- (12)—The resurrection thence.

[The ascension may be added, and the coming as Judge, for “the saints shall judge the world.”]

The plan in the following notes is to take the Story of Christ in 90 sections, of varying length according to the subjects: some shorter passages being omitted.

Section (1) is on Luke 1 and 2.

- (2) to (32) are on Matthew, which includes most of Mark also, but the references are to Matthew.
- (33) to (50) are on the special parables in Luke, which are not in the other gospels.
- (51) to (61) are on the chief passages in John, mostly miracle-parables.
- (62) to (90) resume the story in Matthew (and Mark), chiefly on the Passion of the Christ.
- (91) is on John 14—17, on The Return of Christ.

By this means all the chief stories can be referred to and interpreted briefly, without a constant reference from one Gospel to another. Anyone taking a section a day with these Notes, in three months can examine practically the whole of the Four Gospels.

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1.

LUKE 1 & 2.

The Birth of Christ.

These chapters were a work of art in Aramaic (late Hebrew), translated into Greek by the compiler of the Third Gospel, who was also the compiler of The Book of Acts (1, 1). Luke 1, 8—15, on the birth of John the Baptist, was modelled on Judges 13, 1—5, the birth of *Samson*.

The story of the infancy of Jesus is modelled on the story of the birth and infancy of *Samuel* in 1 Samuel, chaps. 1—3. Samuel was a first-born son, so was Jesus. Hannah sang a song (1 Samuel, 2, 1—10), which is largely reproduced as Mary's song (Luke 1, 46—55). Samuel was presented in the house of the Lord at Shiloh, to aged Eli, when his parents went up to their yearly worship at Shiloh. Jesus similarly is said to have been presented in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem to aged Simeon, when "his parents" went up yearly to worship at the Temple. The words "this shall be a sign" occur in both stories. Young Samuel is called in the Temple of the Lord. Jesus is found in the temple when twelve years old. Before and after the incident in Samuel's story we read the words "the child grew before the Lord" (1 Samuel 2, 21; 3, 19). Similar words occur before and after the story of Jesus being found in the temple (Luke 2, 40, 52).

These first two chapters in Luke were simply composed to glorify the Christ.

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The story of the Shepherds is based on the myth of Mithras (the Persian god, said to have been born in a cave as Jesus was, according to Justin), for as Professor Cumont (Ghent) writes : “Shepherds witnessed the miracle of the entrance of Mithras into the world. . . Worshipfully the shepherds drew near, offering the divine infant the first-fruits of their flocks and their harvests.”

The story of the Christ in the Temple is paralleled in the Egyptian story of Si-Osri (son of Osiris) : “The child grew, he grew strong. He began to speak with the scribes in the temple. All who heard him were lost in wonder at him.” (“Stories of the High Priests of Memphis,” edited by F. Ll. Griffiths.) We see thus how Easterns composed stories to glorify their divine beings. This story is pre-Christian.

2.

MATT. 1, 1—17.

The Genealogy.

This list is different from that of Luke, but both seek to set out the genealogy of Joseph, whose connection in the story with Jesus was only a legal one. It seems to be the genealogy of “Messiah ben Joseph” (son of Joseph) of whom the Jews spoke. Then, when the Virgin-birth became a doctrine (from Gnosticism), a merely legal descent from David was all that could be produced.

Jesus (1, 21) meant Saviour, the Gnostics taking it as the nearest Jewish equivalent for the Soter, in whose descent they believed.

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3.

MATT. 1, 18; 2, 12.

The Virgin-Birth.

It is true that Isaiah 7, 14, in the Greek version gives “parthenos,” a virgin (shall conceive, etc.), but though this would be used to *confirm* the Gnostic doctrine, it could hardly alone have originated it. The usual process of generation was accounted sinful, in those days, and the idea of a god being born of a virgin was the usual one.⁴

Revelation 12 shows a pre-Christian Jewish idea of the Messiah as one who should be born of a virgin (no husband is mentioned), a mythical figure, the mother, being really the Jewish church (Rev. 12, 17). In both passages the child is said to be the “shepherd” of his people (Matt. 2, 6; Rev. 12, 5, in Moffatt’s Translation; and see Rev. 7, 17, and John 10, 11—16; cp. also *Poimandres*, the Gnostic work on the Shepherd).

The Magi from the East represent, in this work of art, the fact that the Eastern wise men would bow before the Christ-spirit. They “fell down and worshipped him” (verse 11).

4.

MATT. 2, 13—18.

The Flight to Egypt.

The idea that Christ came from Egypt probably was a Gnostic conception, meaning that

⁽⁴⁾ See Pfleiderer: *Early Christian Conception of Christ*.

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from Alexandrian Gnosticism Christianity came as a doctrine. It was an enthusiasm for the inner Ideal (as given in Matthew 5 and 6), which men were called on to obey as a preparation for Messiah's Coming. Hosea 11, 1, was misinterpreted to support the idea of the flight: for that text originally referred to the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt: "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

5.

MATT. 2, 19—23.

Nazareth.

Nazareth is here mentioned as a place strange to Mary and Joseph, but in Luke it is said to have been their home! It is unlikely that there was such a place. The modern en-Nasira is hardly "Nazareth."⁵

The Christ was the Neser (netzer) or Shoot, the Branch of Jesse (Isaiah 11, 1), and so the earliest Christians seem to have called themselves the "Nazarenes," and were later called "Christians."

From such a name the home of the Christ was said to be Nazareth. But it may have been an imaginary, symbolic name, like Golgotha and Gethsemane. Even the existence of "Caphernaum" is uncertain. Josephus mentions some such name, but only of a fountain, not of a town.

(5) See Ency. Biblica, article "Nazareth."

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6.

MATT. 3, 1—12.

John the Baptist.

It is essential to understand the contrast between the John-group and the Jesus-group. The John-group was composed of Jews who believed the Messiah was merely “The Coming One”: “He that should come.” The Jesus-group felt the Messiah “in the midst,” and really in their hearts as the Love-Ideal, composed—so far as they knew it—of Humility, Sincerity, Magnanimity and Trust. This was set out in the Sermon on the Mount. The John-group taught that to receive the coming Christ it was necessary to repent and do outwardly good deeds, e.g., “Do violence to no man,” “Share your clothing, etc.”—see Luke 3, 10—14, and Matt. 3, 10. This was the legal way of life by rules.

The Christian felt a deeper Life-principle of spiritual inwardness, and called it “Christ,” the “Saviour.” To-day men realise still more fully the Will of God that man should have freedom (of person), reason (educated), imagination (to create beauty in forms), and social activity of service in one’s daily work. To-day we have the legal-minded, sticklers for the “letter” of rules, and devoid of that sacred passion to give more life and fuller, which is Love indeed.

The legalists were not in the Kingdom of God, though near to it. The least of souls that lived by the spirit or Christ, was greater than “John.” “John the Baptist” probably was no man then. He was a personification of the “Forerunner.”

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There may have been a group of Jews in a John-cult, who baptised other Jews as a sign of their repentance.

7.

MATT. 3, 13—17.

The Baptism of Jesus.

This represents the baptism of the Christ-group, the Nazarenes, or of each new Initiate into that group.

This story is taken from Mark 1, 9—11. It seems as if there was first a John-group near Jerusalem, and from among those baptised by these men there arose a Jesus-group.

Some Jews who looked for the “Coming One” (see Acts 19, 3, 4) called men to repent, and, as a sign of repentance, to be baptised in Jordan. Of those who submitted, some had their inward illumination, or chrism (anointing), and realised a new Spirit in their hearts (Jeremiah 31, 31—34). They knew themselves as God’s sons. The Ideal or “Son of God” was in them. They met, and felt the ideal Love “in their midst.” Thus arose the Jesus-group from those baptised by the John-group. Then came the story in Matt. 3, 16, 17. Matt. 3, 13—15 are later verses—an after-thought of the Evangelist—and not in Mark.

8.

MATT. 4, 1—11.

The Temptation.

The story is enlarged from Mark 1, 12, 13. It is not history. No one could stand on the

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pinnacle of the Temple and see all the world from a mountain in Judea. The three temptations show how Christians, conscious of new spiritual powers, are tempted to pride and to seek political or material gain. It has ever been so. Both baptism and temptation belonged to, and now belong to the Christ-group, not to a man Jesus. The man Christ is the symbol for the Initiate into the new moral Mystery-Religion.

9.

MATT. 5—7.

The Sermon on the Mount.

The “poor” (Luke 6, 20) were the Ptokoi, a class of pious souls, recognised among the Jews. Of them the Christ-group came, aroused by the formalism of the Scribes and Pharisees. The beatitudes show that these meek and pious souls are those who are (even now) really happy.

The Christian is like salt to preserve humanity from decay, like a light (oil-lamp) put on the lamp-stand (the brick projecting from the wall inside a Jewish house). His goodness is a quality of the heart, and is not limited to those of his own nation; it exceeds that of the Pharisee. Five illustrations of this follow :

- (1) Not only do not commit murder, but do not be angry selfishly, do not plan or desire to do any harm to another.
- (2) Not only do not commit adultery, but do not allow the desire so to act possess you.

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- (3) Do not use oaths, but only "Yes" and "No": for oaths make light of "Yes" and "No."
- (4) Do not resist an injury, by giving an injury back: no "eye for an eye."
- (5) Do good, not ill, to foreigners or any whom you think are your enemies (private, commercial or national).

Concerning (4), the Lex Talionis of Exodus 21, 24, Lev. 24, 20, Duet. 19, 21, is abrogated here.

Not even money payments for injuries are to be seized by force of the Law of Torts. For society to revenge itself by the criminal law is denounced here also. There is much revenge left in the criminal law. Society wants the "blood" of the murderer! When the Roman Law took over the methods of self-help and backed them up, it called the disputing parties into a Court to settle about the debt or theft. Then began the care of the State to enforce revenge on the wrong-doer (B.C.451 in The Law of the Twelve Tables). A criminal law followed on. At first crimes (as theft) were treated as torts (civil wrongs), but the revengeful acts of the injured man were accepted as right and just by the State, and later came the *Quaestiones* or councils to judge crimes, and in all ages revenge has existed in criminal laws. Criminals are often men temporarily angry, or they are diseased as in alcoholism, or are sex-maniacs, or feeble-minded, or they lack education. Most need a Home rather than a prison, a training to

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be citizens rather than the lash,* or the years of penal servitude which deepen the evil in them. The whole attitude of the public to crime must change, and, while high-handed cruelty or theft or gross neglect must be clearly exposed and condemned, those who do these things must be patiently trained and not bullied in silence, in cells, as pariahs of society. Force must only be used by Love, not by Revenge, and only used against the diseased or irrational for their good.

Further, war, which is a series of reprisals, is impossible for a man who dares to love his fellow-men : for he cannot thus bless men if he kills them. Wars too are for property, which is placed second to human lives. Matthew 6 tells of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, the need of simplicity and sincerity in almsgiving, prayer and fasting. The "Lord's Prayer" is a collection of short Jewish prayers to show what a sincere prayer is. It is not meant to be constantly repeated.

"Lay not up" (6, 19) meant hoard not. The Jews hoarded rich garments or gold coins in boxes in their houses, or in the ground (thieves "dig through," verse 20), or in the Temple in charge of the Sadducees.

Anxiety about food and clothing is shown to be unnecessary for the Christian. It seems that this must have meant: Do not worry about food for your Father lives and will care for you by means of your fellow-Christians, if ever you are in need (see Acts 2, 44—45; 4, 32—37). The

(*) Flogging is still a penalty in British Law, e.g., for robbery with violence. But judges have declared it is useless. (See H. S. Salt on *Flogging*.)

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words were those of the Church (the vehicle or "body" of Christ) to the individual Christians.

Society to-day must become a church, the Universal Church, with the spirit of the seven-fold Life of God.

The social unrest is not merely a desire for money, but for status, for a recognition of men as persons. They are not to be used up as means to the enrichment of the few : but to co-operate as sons of God. The place of rent and interest in a true society would be a small one. They would be given simply where real inconvenience existed to the lenders of houses or money, and not as now, where a man may feel no inconvenience and yet make much gain without work of any social service.

But how is a New Order to come? If by law-force or war-force it is sought, such will bring only bitterness, and more force and scrambling. Men need the vision of the Crucified God, who lives to give them His Life. *Then* they will love and help one another. Let us dare to love for God is love! While small industries may be in private partnership the great industries (agriculture, cotton, wool, steel, mines) and the railways must surely then be owned by society as a whole, and controlled by elected Boards representing the workers and the consumers. Matthew 7 tells Christians to "Judge not," but this concise statement is an Eastern way of saying : Do not be eager or hasty to judge (= condemn). See Luke 6, 37. The soul is to come to any condemnatory judgment very slowly (Matthew 7, 5), after clearing one's own heart of evil. But opinions must at times be formed, and even

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expressed, not in hate but in deep sorrowful indignation, as the "Woes" of Matthew 23; and expressed thus for the good of the evil doer, that he may see his evil, and repent (cp. Matthew 18, 15—18).

Prayer is set forth as a necessary part of the true life, but too much insistence perhaps was given to petitioning God, cp. Luke 11, 1—13. The Eastern is importunate, not scientific. He sees not that a regular natural order is best for all, a basis for the spiritual life, and that prayer is a listening for God's will. So "Thy will, not mine, be done" (Matthew 26, 39) is the true prayer, but should be said joyously.

The teachings of Christianity, summarised in Matthew 5, 6, 7, were not original. The following are some of the parallels:—

<i>The Ideas in the "Sermon."</i>	<i>The same Ideas in Pre-Christian Writings.</i>
Mt. 5, 3, 4.—"Blessed are the poor in spirit. . . . Blessed are they that mourn."	Is. 61, 1, 2.—"Good tidings unto the meek (pious poor) . . . to comfort all that mourn."
Mt. 5, 5.—"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."	Ps. 37, 11.—"The meek shall inherit the land."
Mt. 5, 8.—"Blessed are the pure in heart."	Ps. 24, 3, 4.—"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? . . . He that hath clean hands and a pure heart."
Mt. 5, 9.—"Blessed are the peacemakers."	Secrets of Enoch, 52, 11.—"Blessed is he who implants peace and love." [The "Secrets of Enoch" was written c. A.D. 1-50, says Dr. Charles. It was in existence before A.D. 70, and so may have been used for the "Logia."]

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The Ideas in the "Sermon."

Mt. 5, 16.—“ Your Father which is in heaven.”

Mt. 5, 28.—“ But I say unto you every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her, etc.”

Mt. 5, 34, 37.—“ Swear not at all . . . let your speech be yea, yea: nay, nay.”

Mt. 5, 39.—“ Resist not an injury.” (Moffatt’s trans : for the Greek is in the neuter : so McNeile ; and it does not refer to the Devil.)

[It means be not revenged, harm not the aggressor.]

Mt. 5, 43.—“ Love your enemies.”

Mt. 6, 6.—“ Thou, when thou prayest enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, etc.”

Mt. 6, 9-12.—“ Hallowed be Thy name: Thy kingdom come: Forgive us our debts.”

[The idea of sins as debts is “thoroughly Jewish”; McNeile.]

The same Ideas in Pre-Christian Writings.

Ecclus. 28, 1-4.—“ O Lord, Father and Governor of my whole life. O Lord, Father and God of my life.”

Ecclus. 9, 5.—“ Gaze not on a maid that thou fall not.” cf. Job 31, 7, 9.—“ I made a covenant with mine eyes: how then should I (a married man) look upon a maid?”

Secrets of Enoch, 49, 1.—“ I swear not by any oath, neither by heaven, nor by earth . . . yea, yea: nay, nay.”

Secrets of Enoch, 1, 3.—“ Endure for the sake of the Lord every wound, every injury, every evil word and attack.”

Secrets of Enoch, 1, 4.—“ If ill-requitals befall you, return them not, either to your neighbour or enemy, because the Lord will return them for you and be your avenger on the day of great judgment, that there be no avenging here among men.”

Is. 26, 20.—“ Enter thou into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself.”

[Phraseology same, though the idea is not exactly concerning prayer.]

Shemoneh-esreh, a collection of Hebrew prayers reached its final form A.D. 70, and existed earlier.

“ Thou art holy, and Thy name is holy . . . Forgive us, our Father.”

The Kaddish has “ May His kingdom reign.” (McNeile, p. 77.)

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The Ideas in the "Sermon."

The same Ideas in Pre-Christian Writings.

Mt. 6, 14, 15.—“ If ye forgive men their trespasses, etc.”
“ If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (above) and Ecclus. 28, 2.—“ Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he hath done unto thee. So shall thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest.”

[Exactly the thought in Mt. 16, 14, 15, and in connection with prayer too.]

Secrets of Enoch, 51, 2.—
“ Hide not your silver in the earth.”

Mt. 6, 19.—“ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth . . . where thieves dig through and steal.”

Prov. 20, 27.—“ The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord searching all the innermost parts of the belly.”

Mt. 6, 22.—“ The lamp of the body is the eye.”

Prov. 8, 17.—“ Those that seek me diligently shall find me.”

Mt. 7, 12.—“ All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, even so do ye also unto them.”

Tobit 4, 15.—“ What thou thyself hatest, do thou to no man.” The positive form is really in Levit 19, 18. —“ Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

Mt. 7, 13, 14.—“ Enter ye in by the narrow gate . . . for broad is the way that leadeth to destruction.”

Ecclus. 21, 10.—“ The way of sinners is made plain . . . but at the end is the pit of hell.”

Jer. 21, 8.—“ Thus saith the Lord: Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.”

[The words were by the prophet but attributed to a Person Jehovah, or the Infinite Life imagined as a person. So the sermon was by Christians but attributed to the Lord Christ.]

Mt. 7, 23.—“ Depart from Me ye that work iniquity.”

Ps. 6, 8.—“ Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.”

[Friedlander and others have collected many parallels.]

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Such are the parallels, and so numerous are they that they show the "Sermon" is not a sermon, but a gradually-produced mosaic of fine spiritual ideas, worked out in the early community, and forming the inward righteousness of illimitable faith and love, which was "greater than the righteousness of the Scribes" (Matt. 5, 20).

The following sayings from *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* show that the ideas of the Sermon on the Mount were not original, but rather a mosaic of Jewish thoughts on the Inner Prophetic Ideal, as opposed to Pharisaism. "The single-minded man coveteth not gold . . . there is no envy in his thoughts . . . nor worry, for he walketh in singleness. Love the Lord and your neighbour. Have compassion on the poor and weak." (Issachar.)

"He that hath a pure mind in love looketh not after a (another) woman with a view to fornication." (Benjamin.)

"Work righteousness that ye may have it as a *treasure in heaven*" (Levi). "Love ye one another from the heart, and if a man sin against thee, cast forth the poison of hate . . and if he repent, forgive him" (Gad.). The star at Christ's birth, and the story of the baptism come perhaps partly from these words :

"A star shall arise to you. . . . A man shall arise. And no sin shall be found in him, and the heavens shall be open unto him" (Judah).

Many sayings of the Christians were simply Jewish proverbs, yet a deeper life-principle was theirs. R. T. Herford has shown that many of

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the proverbial sayings in the Gospels attributed to Jesus, were "part of the common stock of daily speech."⁶ The Rabbis had, e.g., these sayings : "It is enough for a disciple to be as his master" : "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" : "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Since these sayings are summaries of whole discourses by "Jesus"—e.g., Luke 6, 27—38 : Matthew 6, 25—34—the idea that "Jesus" taught anything quite *new* must now be given up. Even the call, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," had long been familiar to Jews. However, Herford admits that Jesus (or now we might say the Christ-group) had "in effect broken with the religion of the Torah" nevertheless⁷ and was opposed to the Pharisees. "The conflict was one between two fundamentally different conceptions of religion, viz., that in which the supreme authority was *Torah* (the Jewish Pentateuch and later traditions), and that in which the supreme authority was the immediate *intuition* of God in the individual soul and conscience. The Pharisees stood for the one : Jesus stood for the other."⁸

The fact cannot be easily disputed that Christianity thus arose as an opposition to Pharisaism, as the group of eighth century prophets⁹ arose as a moral rebellion against the formalism and unspiritual character of the religion of their day : see, e.g., Isaiah 1, 10—20. Evil calls up good. So Christianity gave a

(6) Herford : *Pharisaism*, p. 117.

(7) p. 163.

(8) *Idem.* pp. 167, 168.

(9) Hosea, Isaiah, Amos, Micah.

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righteousness, not of the law (Torah), but of a deeper spirit (Matthew 5).

It could only be Hellenistic Jewish Gnostics that could interpret this spiritual, prophetic movement as the story of a second divine "Person," the Christ.

Christianity was the revelation (by evolution) of the Ideal Inward Spirit, the true consciousness, which is the Tendency of all things, the will of God. The contribution of Christianity to the World-Religion is this Inner Ideal spirit of :

1. Humility.—Matthew 5, 3, 5, 21—26; 7, 1—5.
2. Purity.—Matthew 5, 27—30.
3. Magnanimity.—Matthew 5, 38—48.

No man Jesus was needed to reveal this splendid life. It was in Judaism, but had to be separated from Pharisaism.

Such was called the "Christ," and those who accepted this "Way" of life were said to have "Christ in you," or to be "in Christ." Christ was "being formed" in them. The Epistles have many such expressions, which could not be used of a man, or of a finite limited conscious being. No such man could be in millions of souls at once.

These three great powers of the spirit can be trusted to produce a new social order. Thus by them a man would refuse to hang a criminal or kill an "enemy." He would rather die first. War is undermined here, and all revengefulness that is in the criminal law. The great missionaries (as Moffat, Chalmers, Pennell) living among wild peoples prone to anger and bearing arms, have shown how strong unarmed Love can be.

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But (a) the Ideal was not completed in the Sermon on the Mount; (b) the term "Christ," a personal term, is not a permanent one for the Ideal; and (c) the idea of God in the Sermon is inadequate.

(a) *Modern life has opened up four more aspects of the Inner Ideal, viz. :—*

4. The spirit of Service (as in a family of citizens).
5. The imagination of Beauty, in art and social order.
6. Open-mindedness—the scientific spirit, as opposed to prejudice and bigotry. Reason.
7. Self-ownership or freedom—as opposed to subservience, in slavery, in marriage, or in industry.

These four spiritual powers and the three above can evolve a true social order.

Thus mankind has reached the seven-fold moral Ideal of the Love using Reason to create beauty. There are seven colours in one white Light Eternal. The New Testament left "status" much as it was. It did not denounce slavery *per se* (see Eph. 6, 5—9; Col. 3, 22—41), and though a Christian slave was to be received as a brother, his *status* was not changed. It was centuries before Christians challenged the institution of slavery, or the subordination of wives (see Eph. 5, 22—24) or of employés. Now has dawned freedom of personality for all these. Capitalism has done some good work but as a system it is unstable, and must pass into the co-operation of all men, as brothers in God's family.

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(b) *The term “Jesus Christ” may be used for an aspect of God, God as the Ideal Will, but it seems that it cannot last. We are not yet ready with a better term, but we can think of the Infinite Life as ever loving and living to help finite souls achieve the Infinite and share that Life and Joy Immortal. But other values besides the (1) Good-Will must be recognised as in the Infinite, viz., (2) Reason, which analyses and synthesises, and (3) Imagination, which sees and creates Beauty.*

(c) *The idea of God in the Sermon on the Mount is an inadequate one. The term “Father” is a symbol, and has much truth in it, in that God is the Source of human life and disciplines it for good ends.*

But there is contingency, uncertainty, unforeseeableness, accident in all human lives, and perhaps in plant and animal lives too. Each conscious organism has a certain newness, freshness, a freedom to some extent. God is the Infinite Life often hampered or thwarted by finite lives. In men merely sin is real. The Pantheism of the one branching into the Many, is inadequate. The Many (finite souls) are not merely the branches of the One. They have some freedom, and they can sin against the Infinite Life. Moreover they are all ignorant, and they suffer by both sin and ignorance—and often the innocent suffer by the sin or ignorance of others. The New Testament “Father” who sees in secret is a magnificent truth, but it needs to be supplemented now, after centuries of human experience, sorrow and of philosophy thereon. God is self-limited into the finite stars and souls,

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in whom He is the Will to the Ideal. No prayer can bring man the cure for lunacy, deafness, cancer or influenza, any more than it brought the cure for plague which from 1300 to 1700 A.D. took off 25,000,000 lives by a painful death. The "Father" suggests an onlooking kind Deity who can interfere, can prevent accidents, and cure diseases at will. But man has himself to find out how to do these things. God is the living power of the Ideal Values, which are real only so far as man has achieved them. God is the Reason aflame with Love expressed in Harmony, so far as in man this Infinite Ideal Life exists. God is the Urge or Will towards this Ideal Life in finite souls. But He is not an Onlooker, nor a Providence. He has crucified Himself to live in and for finite souls, or rather He is ever so crucified into nature and men. In some men, most men perhaps, God aspires. God is the Infinite, Aspiring Life, realising Reason-Love-Beauty—in finite souls. Such a life is inexhaustible, and so is the Infinite and immortal God. The New Testament was too largely influenced by the Jewish Deistic idea of God as separate, in heaven above or at least apart from men. Such an idea is still in Judaism, as expressed in the *Jewish Encyclopædia*, article "God."

The Jews explained sin as caused by a Devil, the idea of which came from Persia: he was the Ruler of this world. But such a dualism is no longer possible.

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10.

MATT. 8, 1—4.

Leper Cleansed.

It seems this story must be symbolical. For leprosy, whether with tubercular nodules or with degeneration of the nerves, is cured very slowly, if at all. But the Christ-spirit can “make the foulest clean,” as a hymn says. It is the soul that is cleansed by the Ideal Divine.

11.

MATT. 8, 5—13.

The Centurion.

Verses 10 and 11 are the key to the story, viz., that the Gentiles had more faith in the Christ-life than the Jews possessed. See Acts 13, 46—48. This story was a parable which came to be told as a miracle, as in so many cases in the Gospels : see in John 6 the feeding of the 5,000 by Christ as the Bread of Life.

12.

MATT. 8, 23—27.

The Storm Calmed.

Psalm 107 says : “He maketh the storm a calm.” To actually still a storm would not be of any moral value, and not even of physical worth, as storms are good to bring harmony once more in nature. The story is a parable become a miracle. The storm is in men’s souls. The hymn “Fierce raged the tempest” in its last

THE INNER MEANING OF verse really interprets the story as a parable of Christ calming the troubled soul.

“ And when our life is clouded o'er,
And storm-winds drift us from the shore,
Say, lest we sink to rise no more,
‘ Peace, be still.’ ”

The material of the story is from Jonah 1 and Psalm 107, 29.

13.

MATT. 8, 28—34.

Demoniacs.

Justin Martyr's writings (about 150 A.D.) show that “ devils ” were regarded as the causes of sins, rather than the causes of diseases. They are declared to be responsible for heathen mythology, and for heresy. The Christ-spirit casts out such demons. The “ diseases ” cured by “ Christ ” were really mental states of the soul, as anger or despair or greed. For the “ Christ ” meant the divine Ideal Spirit, which was greater than Solomon and Jonah, and Lord of the Sabbath. Such a spirit was personified as Christ. The evil spirit was personified as Satan.

14.

MATT. 9, 18—38.

*The “ Dead,” “ Blind,” “ Dumb.” The
miracles of healing generally.*

The basis of the stories lay in the experience of the Christ-group in their missionary efforts (9, 35). They saw how men became “ new creations ” in Christ (Acts 14, 27 : 2 Corin. 5, 17), This was set out as a fulfilment of Isaiah 35, 5—6, describing God's coming. “ Then the eyes of

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the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.” Stories on each of these points were therefore composed in regard to the “ Christ.”

Blind man.—Matthew 9, 27—31; 20, 29—34.

Deaf man.—Mark 7, 31—37; 9, 25.

Lame man.—Matthew 9, 1—9 (palsy, *see verse 7*).

Dumb man.—Matthew 9, 32—34.

See Matthew 15, 30—31 telling of all such being healed : and the summary in 11, 5 of the Messiah’s works. Mark 7, 31—37 on the man who was “ deaf and had an impediment in his speech,” and who “ spake plain ” by Christ’s help, is founded on Isaiah 32, 4. “ The tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.” To “ cast out demons ” meant to tame angry men or temporarily cure epileptics by a controlling power. *The Jewish Encyclopædia* thus writes of *Demonology* in the New Testament :—

“ The whole Jewish and pagan world at the beginning of the Christian era believed in those magic formulas by which the evil powers of the demons could be subdued, and the Jewish exorcists found a fertile soil everywhere for the cultivation of their Essene notions and their magic. This was the atmosphere in which Christianity arose, with the claim of “ healing all that were oppressed by the devil ” (Acts 10, 38). . . . The name of Jesus became the power by which the host of Satan was to be overcome. . . .

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Pharisaism, while increasing the yoke of ceremonial laws for the sake of love of God, showed a way to overcome the fear of demons. Belief in the power of the Law became the antidote against the spirit of pessimism and asceticism which was fostered by the Essenes and by their Christian heirs."

In the New Testament there are several indications that the name of "Jesus" was used by early Christians (as exorcists) as a name in which to "cast out demons": see Matthew 7, 22; Mark 9, 38; 16, 17; Luke 10, 17; Acts 19, 13. The name must have been a famous one, even perhaps a divine one,¹⁰ to be thus used. It could hardly have been the name of a lowly Teacher living at the time, as it is represented in the above passages in the Gospels as of a revered and mighty Saviour, a hero or a god.

The raising of the dead meant the spiritually dead. To raise dead men has no moral worth. They die again. Moreover why should one child be restored rather than another? In Britain 100,000 die under five years of age every year: and so in other lands. The story is a parable become a miracle. The "raising" is of those dead in *sin*—see Ephes. 2, 6: 5, 14.

In the story of Jairus the "daughter" meant a people, viz., the Jews (see Zechar, 9, 9—10). Christ could heal the Jews, "dead" in obstinacy and bigotry and legalism.

(10) Or a demon-god, such as Beelzebub.

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15.

MATT. 10.

The Disciples as Apostles.

A very important chapter of Church history. But not by a man Jesus who for one and a half years was supposed to have taught a few men in Galilee; for the chapter implies there had been persecutions (verses 16—39). The Christ-group had its secret meetings (27). Its rejection by the Sanhedrin was its “crucifixion” (38—39). The Christian shared the Universal Cross (Eph, 2, 20). Verses 17—23. Mr. Montefiore says these verses are “clearly of late date.” But why not the whole chapter then? And if these words were put into the mouth of “Jesus,” much more may have been put into his mouth.

16.

MATT. 11, 1—19.

John and Christ.

These verses were written long after the beginnings of Christianity, when Christians came to think of “John” and “Christ” as having been real men on earth. The mystic story had become a kind of “history,” as Christians thought. “John” was thought of as Elijah returned to earth (14), and “Christ” as the wonder-working Son of Man (4, 19).

Originally there were groups of men and women, arising from the Essenes, of whom 4,000 lived in villages near the Jordan and Dead Sea. One group was the John-group, another (from it) the Nazarenes or earliest Christ-men. Mark

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tells us on what passages the John-story was built, viz., Isaiah 40, 3—5, and Malachi 4, 5; 3, 1. Hence the picture of John was on the lines of Elijah as set out in 2 Kings 1—8.¹¹ Josephus' reference to John¹² breaks the context and so is an interpolation by Christians, as was also the reference to Jesus Christ. The latter was clearly composed by a believer in Christ, but Josephus was not a Christian. Similarly in *The Antiquities* (20, 9, 1) we read of "the brother of Jesus who was called Christ, whose name was James." The passage was inserted by a Christian, from Galatians 1, 19. Josephus would not so write. We know that the Christians made insertions in the Psalms even (*e.g.*, Ps. 22, 16).

17.

MATT. 11, 25—30.

Prayer and Invitation.

Ecclesiasticus 51 supplied many of the phrases here. The passage is concerning the Eternal Ideal in God, called "the Son"; an Ideal which if accepted in a lowly mind gives rest to the soul, conquering pride, vanity, greed and hate—and all their anxious ambitions.

(11) "He was a man with a garment of hair (R. V. margin) and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins."

(12) Antiq. 18, 5, 2.

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18.

MATT. 12, 1—14.

The Sabbath.

Here was a point where Christians came into conflict with the Scribes and Pharisees. Another was on "clean" foods, another on the ceremonial "washings" (Mark 7, 1—23). On these and other points the Scribes had developed "traditions," extra rules, and the Pharisees thought in "keeping of them there was great reward." But many ignored the clean heart and right spirit for which the Christ, when He came, would look.

Possibly there was an occasion when early Nazarenes plucked corn on a Sabbath and came into conflict with the Pharisees, by whom such an act was accounted "reaping"! But more likely these two stories were originally points of discussion between Nazarenes and Pharisees. "May we pluck corn on a Sabbath?" "May we heal a man on a Sabbath?" The Rabbis frequently had such questions discussed.

Verses 24—25 attack the Pharisees, and point to the Christ as greater than Jonah and Solomon. No lowly teacher would so speak of himself. The passage is Church doctrine of that splendid ideal Spirit, which was greater than the prophets and wise men of old, in whomsoever that Spirit was found.

19.

MATT. 12, 46—50.

Who is Christ's Mother?

"Christ" is the Will of God in souls who

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aspire to the Ideal life (2 Corin. 3, 17). All who obey that Will are the brothers or mothers of Christ (cp. 1 Corin. 9, 5 on a group who so named themselves).

20.

MATT. 13, 1—52.

Parables of the Kingdom.

The Sower.—An explanation is given in verses 19—23. The translation of Dr. Moffat is as follows : “ When anyone hears the word of the Realm, and does not understand it, the evil one comes, and snatches away what has been sown in his heart : that is the man who is sown on the road. As for him who is sown on stony soil, that is the man who hears the word and accepts it at once with enthusiasm : he has no root in himself, he does not last, but when the word brings trouble or persecution, he is at once repelled. As for him who is sown among thorns, that is the man who listens to the word, but the worry of the world, and the delight of being rich choke the word ; so it proves unfruitful. As for him who is sown on good soil, that is the man who hears the word, and understands it : he bears fruit, producing now a hundred-fold, now sixty, and now thirty-fold.”

Thus it is clear that the seeds are souls, and not something put into souls. Each soul is an aspect of the Logos. The Logos is differentiated into souls, as a cloud into raindrops, each of which finds some flower or bit of soil as a vehicle for itself. The Logos is sown as souls into human bodies. Luke says : “ The seed is the Logos of God.” This is the real incarnation,

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ever going on, that the Logos (Ideal Life-Principle of God) is sown into human bodies. This Word or Logos was called by Philo "the Son of God," and the Christians the "Christ." Both thus personified it. It is the Love-principle in God.

The Tares.—This is an allegory concerning the Church into which came men who caused "stumbling"—see 18, 7. They could not be separated out all at once. Christ would separate them at his coming : see 25, 31—46.

The mustard seed and leaven tell of the quiet growth of the Church from small beginnings. Christ is the seed, the leaven : i.e., the Divine Ideal sown as souls into this world.

The Treasure and the Pearl.—All good things may be enemies of the best. The best is the Life which shares God's Life.

"Love thy God and love Him only,
Then thy heart will ne'er be lonely ;
In that one Great Spirit meet
All things mighty, grave and sweet."

But this God is not apart, but *in* all things and persons, in varying aspects.

The idea of the Pearl was probably taken from the Gnostics, as also the parables of the seed,¹³ which go back to Plato (*Timæus*). Bardesanes,¹⁴ the Gnostic, wrote "The Hymn of the Soul," and told of the one pearl in Egypt which was to

(13) See Mark 4, 1—34.

(14) Bardesanes was born at Edessa A.D. 155 and died 233. See G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, pp. 392—414 on this hymn.

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be found and cherished. The pearl was the gnosis or Truth, which New Testament writers call the "Christ" (John 14, 6; cp. Christ as Wisdom in 1 Corin. 1, 30). The gnosis of Gnosticism was not a mere speculative truth, but rather a practical life, a being lifted by the Saviour who is (ever) crucified in the phenomenal to save souls.

21.

MATT. 13, 53—58.

The Relatives of Jesus.

The passage is taken from Mark 6, 1—6, but the names are taken, by a confusion, from the children of another Mary : see Mark 15, 40. The idea of Christ as a carpenter comes probably from the Gnostic conception of the Demiurge or world-fashioner, which goes back to Plato.¹⁵ The Christ or Logos was the Fashioner of the universe : see Colos. 1, 15—17; 1 Corin. 8, 6. The Love-Ideal is the Final Cause of the universe :¹⁶ and this is the faith of the future. The Infinite Lover is self-crucified here and cannot all at once evolve the perfect Life, but through difficulties overcome it has already dawned : and we live

"Knowing one thing the sacredest and fairest,
Knowing there is not anything but Love."

—F. W. H. Myers' *St. Paul.*

(15) See the *Timaeus* on the inferior order of gods who fashion the chaotic world.

(16) i.e., the Aim or Goal of souls : and for them to reach it all things were organised.

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22.

MATT. 14, 1—12.

The Death of John the Baptist.

We have seen that there was probably no man John the Baptist. He is the “forerunner” of the Christ, an ideal figure described as an Elijah (2 Kings 1, 8). He represents the law at its best, duty as preceding love.

Montefiore says: the story of John the Baptist's death is “full of historical improbabilities,” and may be regarded as “legendary.” Thus “Herodias was not the wife of Herod's brother Philip, but of another brother, also called Herod.” Further, no princess would dance at court,¹⁷ especially if married.

[For the story of the 5,000 fed see a paragraph in John (56).]

23.

MATT. 14, 22—36.

Jesus Walking on the Sea.

The geographical details are very vague. They are only “framework” for a picture of the Christ's power. The material is from Job 38, 16, and Wisdom of Solomon 24, 5, concerning God walking on the sea. Power over difficulties is what is meant really, such power arising from the “Christ” in men. Montefiore says “The story seems a variant on 4, 35—41.”

(17) Commentary on St. Matthew by Dr. McNeile, which refers to the low status of public dancers.

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Dr. Estlin Carpenter thinks "we have here again the materialising of symbols."¹⁸ This is an explanation of a good many stories of the Christ.

24.

MATT. 15, 1—20.

Clean and Unclean.

Here is the clear conflict between ceremonialism and inward goodness which needs no ceremonialism. No doubt the Jews to-day put "meats" in a secondary place, and a Jewish minister may advise an adult man who becomes a Jew that he should not be circumcised. But Judaism is becoming "liberalised" now. Is it not Christianity in Jews which has done this?

25.

MATT. 15, 21—31.

The Canaanite Woman.

Even Dr. McNeile, who is in the main conservative, writes : "The literary history of the narrative is disputed. If Matthew had no other source than Mark he contributes an unusual amount from his own pen, and that is of a highly artistic and dramatic character." The fact is, the whole story is a work of art. There was no reporter to take down the words spoken : and that is true of many of the gospel stories (e.g., Gethsemane).

(18) *The First Three Gospels* : pp. 179, 180.

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The woman of Canaan represents the Gentiles. "Christ" could save the Gentiles even though at first the Christ-group went to save their own Jewish people: see Acts 13, 46; 15, 3; 18, 6, where Paul turned from the Jews to the Gentiles.

[The feeding of the 4,000 is a reduplication of the story of the 5,000.]

26.

MATT. 16, 1—12.

A Miracle Desired.

The Jews called on the Christ-group to produce a miracle (sign)—cp. 1 Corin. 1, 22. But the Community's only sign was that of Jonah, viz., the preached word of the indwelling "Christ" or Love-Ideal of God: see Colos. 1, 27, 28.

The conversation in verses 5—12 show how a conversation could be invented by the evangelists: for even conservative scholars agree that there was no feeding of the 4,000, really. Yet here two feedings are involved.

27.

MATT. 16, 13—28.

Peter's Confession.

This is an important passage: but an ecclesiastical one; not a piece of the history of a man Jesus. Verses 17—19 are not in Mark.

The origin of the passage lay in the historical fact that the Peter-party (say about A.D. 60) rejected the idea that the Christ was a sufferer

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(1 Corin. 1, 12, 23). So Peter "denied" Christ, and this refusal to believe the Christ was a suffering Christ was written in this story (see 16, 22). The School of Peter could only think of Christ as a King who would reign. But the Pauline school (the Gnostic School lay behind the Pauline School), in their "Epistles," taught that Christ fulfilled Isaiah 53, "and died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Corin. 15, 3).

The truth behind this picture lies in the deep explanation of the universe as the crucifixion of God. The Infinite is ever crucified into the finite to evolve and educate finite souls into His Infinite Life, and its immortal power and joy. Such was what the Gnostics meant (see *Poimandres* in G. R. S. Mead's *Thrice-Greatest Hermes*).

28.

MATT. 17, 1—13.

The Transfiguration.

Dr. McNeile says: "Almost every detail lends itself to allegorical treatment." But could such be so of any historical event? The miraculous nature of the story, and the symbolic figures of Moses and Elias, representing the Law and the Prophets (than whom Jesus Christ is greater), point to the non-historical nature of this story. The only history in the Gospels is the conflict between the Christ-group and the Pharisees who stood for a lower legal religion. It runs through the New Testament and is in the epistles (see Romans and Galatians on the law and the spirit: and cp. Philippians 3, 2—8).

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The Transfiguration is a mystical story to show that the Christ-spirit is greater than the Law and the Prophets. See 2 Corin. 3.

29.

MATT. 17, 24—27.

The Tax.

[On the demoniacs and healing works see above.]

This little story represents¹⁹ the attitude of the Christians, *after* A.D. 70, to the paying of the tax imposed by the Romans for the upkeep of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus.²⁰

The stater=2 didrachma=twice 1s. 4½d. The "sons" are the Christians. The "strangers" are the pagans. Verse 27 means "go and fish for it," *i.e.*, get it somehow. The Christians believed it right to pay tribute, for coins belonged to Cæsar. See Romans 13, 7, written before this Logion, and perhaps from it this Logion and that of Matt. 22, 21, were written. Had a Teacher Christ told men to pay tribute, such a dictum would surely be referred to in Rom. 13, 7. But the Epistles know not a Teaching Christ.

30.

MATT. 18, 1—14.

The "Little Child" Allegory.

The little child originally meant no boy or girl but the less-instructed Christian, the novitiate.

(19) As J. Weiss has shown.

(20) Josephus, B.J., 7, 6, 6.

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See Proverbs 2, 1; 3, 1; 4, 1; 5, 1; 6, 1, 20; 7, 1.
“ My son,” i.e., the student of sacred truth. See Romans 14, 1—15, how some Christians were more advanced than others.

In Matthew 18, 1—6, a rebuke is offered (by the Church) to those who disdained humble beginners in the faith, the “ least of these brethren.”

Such was the original idea. Then grew up stories about Jesus as a man receiving children or babies, and the disciples refusing to let the young folks draw near !! A sense of humour is needed by a modern Christian student !

Verse 5. The phrase “ name of Jesus.” This was usually used in connection with exorcisms of “ demons ” by Christians. See Mark 16, 17, “ in my name shall they cast out devils.”

But here it is used as meaning “ for the sake of Jesus,” i.e., whoso shall receive or help any humble believer because he is a believer in me, etc. See Matthew 10, 40—42.

31.

MATT. 18, 15—20.

Church Discipline.

On verse 15, Holtzmann says : “ We have in these verses a piece of ancient Christian law (Gemeindeordnung) put into the mouth of

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Jesus.” Verses 15—18 show that the sanction for the moral ideal is not prisons and hangings nor immense fines imposed by one nation on another. It is the calm work of reasoning, then of exposure, and last of the sorrowful boycott if no repentance comes.

Verse 20. Those who believe a man Jesus spake these words are at a loss how to interpret them. Montefiore says : “ Such a continued and mystical presence could hardly be claimed by or asserted of any man, but could only have been made by someone who believed he was a divine being ” (*Synoptic Gospels*, 2, 682). Montefiore thinks Jesus did not say the words. Wellhausen said that Jesus here speaks as if he were already in heaven.

Montefiore continues : “ The idea of the continued mystic presence of Jesus in his community is adapted and borrowed from the Jewish idea of the presence of God in Israel.”

Exactly : “ Jesus ” was a personified aspect of God. Such language was used of the Shechinah (Aboth 3, 3).

“ Weiss holds that the verse could not have been spoken by Jesus. It is based upon the faith of the Christian Community in Christ’s invisible presence, through the prayers of those who believe in him.” That was the only kind of presence ever known by the Christians. They were the “ Body ” of Christ.

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32.

MATT. 18, 21—35.

Unlimited Forgiveness.

“ Seventy times seven ” means an unlimited number of times. To forgive means to bear no ill-will, to retaliate not, to give no reprisals, but to do good to those who do us ill, whether the “ enemy ” be one man or a nation. When the man (or nation) repents, he is to be received into fellowship again, which is the second part of forgiveness. It may be some time ere he is trusted again as a friend, as he may need to discipline and prove himself to be worthy of trust, e.g., in money matters.

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33.

LUKE 9, 51—62.

The Journey to Jerusalem.

The passage really gives the instruction of the Church in regard to *the Samaritans* (compare John 4) who rejected the “ Christ.” They were not to be ill-treated in any way. The gloss to verse 55 explains why : “ The Son of man came not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” The passage sets forth “ Christ ” (the Inner Ideal) as greater than Elijah (2 Kings 1, 10—12). Luke 9, 57—62 tells those aspiring to be Christians to *count the cost*. The words imply that there had been persecutions and privations. Christians might be driven from place to place : see Acts 8, 1—3. Those who know not the Ideal

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Life can attend to the formal duties, such as burials. The Christian must be ready, if need be, to give up all. Such was the Church's call (see 10, 1—24) for disciples to be missionaries. It was almost essential, and is so now.

34.

LUKE 10, 1—24.

The Mission of the Seventy.

This is set out by a confusion, probably, with the mission described in Matt. 10. It was a mission inspired by an *inner* inspiration: cp. Acts 13, 1—3. No visible Jesus sent these men. The story implies that persecution had existed (verses 3, 10, 16), as in Matt. 10. No doubt the early Church made such preaching tours (see Acts 13, 1—3). Verse 22 is the theological verse of Matt. 11, 27. Verse 19 is the Gnostic view that the Redeemer helps souls to fight the demons.

35.

LUKE 10, 25—37.

The Good Samaritan.

Who is my neighbour? was a question of interest among the Rabbis, some of whom answered: "Your fellow-Jew." Lightfoot quotes Maimonides that such was the usual answer. ("When a Jew says 'his neighbour,' he excepts all gentiles.") This parable is thus the Christian protest against the Pharisaic narrow formalism of that day. It was as such a protest that Christianity arose. The road from Jerusalem (3,000 feet up) goes twenty miles downhill

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to Jericho, and was of old infested with robbers probably. Pompey destroyed some brigands near Jericho.

The moral law of compassion (verse 37) is not a monopoly of Christianity. Stoicism taught it and pre-Christian Judaism : see Duet. 24, 5—22 : Levit. 19, 1—18, and *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (107 B.C.).

36.

LUKE 10, 38—42.

Martha and Mary.

Martha and Mary seem to be allegorical characters. Martha meant “Kuria,” mistress, a giver of laws. Therefore she represents the Law, while Mary by her eagerness to learn represented the teachable Christian, the humble life, the life of the Ptokoi or meek ones. Only that one thing is needed. The Church calls here for catechumens, initiates.

37.

LUKE 11, 1—13.

Prayer.

The compiler of this Third Gospel tried to place the Logia into settings of his own imagination. The shorter version of the “Lord’s Prayer” (really a group of Jewish prayers) indicates that “Luke” used an earlier edition of the Logia, perhaps, than Matthew, even if Luke was written later than Matthew. The parable of the Friend at midnight is such a parable as would be commonly known among the Rabbis.

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Verse 13 Luke changed the “good things” of which Matthew tells to “the Holy Spirit.” This is a theological change, for the compiler of The Acts of the Apostle had much to say of the “Holy Spirit” (or “a holy Spirit”). Hence the change here. Prayer is really listening for the Voice of the Infinite in the finite, and then obeying it.

38.

LUKE 11, 29—33.

Christ greater than Jonah and Solomon.

We cannot imagine any Jew openly declaring himself to be greater than Solomon and Jonah. If he *were* greater, he would not say so. The verses are Christology, not a history of what was said by a man Jesus. The wooden, un-eastern, unimaginative Commentaries never perceive so simple a truth. They treat the Gospels as history. They assume (but do not prove) that a man Jesus lived. Their days are numbered, however, useful in many respects though they have been.

39.

LUKE 12, 35—59.

Watch.

Montefiore²¹ says that “verses 35 and 36 must clearly be later than Jesus.” In our view, they imply the Church as speaker, not a man Jesus. So verse 37, “he.” Had a teacher spoken thus he would have said “I”. So through verses

(21) *Synoptic Gospels*, 2, 958.

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35—40, 43. “I” appears in verses 49—51, but the verses imply that families had already been divided up, which would not have occurred in one and a half years, the length of Christ’s ministry according to Mark.

The meaning originally was : “ We who look for the Coming Christ are persecuted. Surely He will soon come now and relieve and justify us. The time is short. The Lord is at hand. Let men repent ere it be too late.”

But no Lord came and no judgment as expected ! The old world rolled on, and the Romans ruled as severely as ever, and extended their sway into Britain.

Such words are not by the Eternal Logos made incarnate, but by a fallible Church, who however incarnated the idea of an inner goodness, and called it the “Christ.” They expected “Him” to appear openly to all. But “He” really is an aspect of the ever invisible God. God is ever “appearing” in the crises of history, and of the individual soul !

40.

LUKE 13, 1—9.

The Galileans and the Parable of the Barren Fig-tree.

The Jews would perish if they repented not and accepted the Christ who soon would appear —such is the burden of this passage. The parable appears as a miracle of the rather absurd cursing of a fig-tree, in Mark. Luke used an earlier edition of the *Logia* than Mark used. In

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Luke's version the story was still a parable of the Jewish nation.

41.

LUKE 13, 10—17.

A Question on the Sabbath.

In discussion with the Rabbis, the Christians found themselves standing for a freer conception of life. Their Christ-spirit was Lord of the Sabbath. They may have put forward a case of a woman long ill : was she to be healed on the Sabbath? The same question is dealt with in Mark 2, 23; 3, 6.

42.

LUKE 14, 1—6.

The Man with Dropsy.

Here too the question may have been : " If a man had dropsy, would you not heal him on the Sabbath? " Here the Christians come into conflict with the Pharisees. Such a discussion reported verbally, and later in the *Logia*, came to be told as if a miracle had been done by the Christ on a Sabbath.

43.

LUKE 14, 7—24.

Calling Men to a Feast.

The Messiah's coming is referred to. It was likened to a feast. Many were called to it, but few chosen for it. They "chose" themselves really. If a man Jesus lived, and so spake, why did he not say : " I the Messiah am come.

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Here I am. Come and sit down to my banquet!" The Christ-group hoped Christ would soon come, but He came not.

44.

LUKE 14, 25—35.

Count the Cost!

Few are really disciples of the Inner Ideal (given in Matthew 5, 20—48). The passage implies that persecutions had begun by the Jews. Some Christians (originally called Nazarenes from Netzer—Isaiah 11, 1) were driven from Jerusalem (Acts 8, 1—3). Their persecution was later called "sharing the cross of Christ" (verse 27), *i.e.*, limitation endured so as to save souls (Eph. 2, 20; Col. 1, 24).

45.

LUKE 15.

The Lost Sheep, Silver and Son.

These stories were Jewish parables, and were used here against the Pharisees. The elder son is clearly a symbol of the self-righteous respectable Pharisee who had no vices, and looked askance at anyone who had.

Rev. G. Friedlander has shown that Philo had the main elements of the story of the prodigal son :—

"Where there are two sons, one good and one wicked, the father says he will bless"⁽²²⁾

(22) The Greek verb is only found in Luke in the New Testament books: it is also used by Philo.

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the latter, not because he prefers him to his brother who is better, but because he knows that the good son can, by his merit, follow the right path : whereas the wicked son has no hope of salvation without the prayer of the father.”²³

Thus the parable existed, in idea at least, before Christianity.

46.

LUKE 16, 1—18.

The Clever Steward.

The story is used to indicate that the Christian will use well his gifts and goods (by alms) to enter heaven when he dies. It is a story not of the highest moral tone, for true virtue is action for its own sake, not for a reward to oneself. Verse 14 shows the story is used also against the Pharisees and taken into the Church’s teaching (or Logia) for that purpose perhaps. Not all the Pharisees were self-righteous hypocrites : but that many were is acknowledged now by the Jews.²⁴

47.

LUKE 16, 19—31.

Dives and Lazarus.

A rather weak Jewish story, since a man does not go to heaven’s joy merely because he is poor. Is there a great “gulf” separating good and evil men?

(23) Philo : Bohn’s Translation 4, 278, 279. (See 223, 224).

(24) See *Jewish Encyclopædia*, article “Pharisees.”

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48.

LUKE 17, 11—19.

Lepers Cleansed.

Montefiore, in his *The Synoptic Gospels*, says this story is a variant of the healing of the leper in 5, 12—16 (Mark 1, 40—45), and “ told with an anti-Jewish tendency. Jesus heals from afar, as Elisha healed Naaman. Was there any real fact behind the story? It is doubtful. Its main purpose is symbolic, and its historical character is very dubious.” Such remarks really apply to a great deal in the Gospels which are not history, but symbolic doctrine.

49.

LUKE 18, 1—8.

The Unjust Judge.

Verse 8 shows the story is not by a Messiah who was present and told the parable. The Messiah was yet to come. The narrative indicates that some of the Christians had lost heart: cp. 2 Peter 3, 1—13. The material for the story seems to be taken from Ecclesiasticus 35, 15.

50.

LUKE 18, 9—14.

Pharisee and Publican.

Christianity exposed the legalism of (most of) the Pharisees, and put a right spirit in its place (Jerem. 31, 31—34 : Romans 8, 1—9).

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SPECIAL SECTIONS IN JOHN.

51.

JOHN 1, 1—18.

The Logos, Truth, Life.

From Philo came the ideas on the Logos : Philo used Stoicism and the Old Testament and the Gnosticism of Alexandria (where he lived). It has been shown that Philo described the Logos as “the rock that followed Israel in the wilderness, the Image of God, the first Man who is the archetypal man, the Son of God, the High Priest, the first-born Son, the Paraclete, and the Mediator. All of these aspects reappear in the New Testament description of its Christ.”²⁵

The theological discourses in John are full of beautiful and valuable thought on the outgoing self-revealing God, the Logos—Saviour—Light—Life, of which the Gnostics spoke. They personified this aspect of God, and took the Christ figure as another name for such.

No doubt the Johannine school who composed the Fourth Gospel, and the three Epistles, which are in the same style, believed that some kind of a man Jesus existed on earth a century earlier. Indeed these books are written partly to combat the Doketic Gnostics who asserted that Jesus was a phantom or appearance only, and did not really suffer on a cross (see 1 John 5, 6—8, 20; 2 John 7).

(25) G. Friedlander : *Hellenism and Christianity* : pp. 85—124 : where the various references to Philo are given in full. See also Prof. John Watson, in *The Philosophical Basis of Religion*, page 17, Philo described the Logos also as the instrument of God in the creation of the world (cp. Colos. 1, 15—17).

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The Gnostic view was suppressed, though it existed in the Church for many years, and was the truer view. For the idea of a Primal Man "Jesus" arose from the Gnostics in Alexandria taking the Christ, of *The Book of Enoch*, and the early Christ-group, as equivalent to the Logos, the Son of God, Saviour, whom the Gnostics taught had already descended to save men : i.e., He was ever doing so, it was a divine procession ever going on ; but such was described, at that time, in a symbolic story of a divine being as having once descended and lived on earth. The article on "Gnosticism" in *The Encyclopædia Britannica* (XI. Edition) has shown from the writing of Reitzenstein²⁶ that Gnosticism was pre-Christian in all its essential features.

The Gnostic teaching of the mystic Christ—Logos—Saviour as the Primal MAN who had come down and was crucified to save men and lift men to heaven, came to be told as the story of a kind of man (see Philip 2, 6—8). He was called "Jesus" as that was the nearest Hebrew word (Joshua) to Saviour.

The truth is that the Infinite Life (Reason aflame with Love seeking expression in Harmony) is Himself ever being evolved in men as they, by efforts, achieve that life. This is the Gospel for all time.

(26) On *Poimandres*, a pre-Christian Gnostic work in Greek describing the 3 descents of the Logos, Primal Man, Life and Light. A translation is given in G. R. S. Mead, *Thrice-Greatest Hermes*.

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52.

JOHN 2, 1—11.

The Water to Wine.

This miracle is derived from a mystic parable meaning that Christ, *i.e.*, the Inner Ideal, can give a life which is as wine to the feebler water of legalistic Judaism. Philo used the simile also. There is no moral value in a pure miracle of producing much wine, even if it could be done.

53.

JOHN 3, 1—21.

Nicodemus.

Nicodemus is a fictitious character representing the Jews, who had no insight at first, but yet were enquirers into the new religion of the mystic Christ-Ideal. It needs a new birth “from above” if a man is to grasp the way of the spirit —see 1 Corin. 1, 26—2, 16 (in Moffatt’s Translation).

54.

JOHN 4.

The Samaritans.

One of the problems of the early Christ-group was the Samaritans, who were not orthodox Jews, nor were they heathen: see Luke 9, 51—56. The passage here is a story composed to show that the Christ-spirit can be the Saviour (verse 42) of the Samaritans and free them from a localised worship of God (verse 21). The “5

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husbands " (verse 18) meant the religious leaders
of the Samaritans in the past.

55.

JOHN 5, 1—9.

The Man at Bethesda.

The man represented the Jews who were 38 years in the wilderness (Duet. 2, 14), and the 5 porches are a symbol for the 5 books of Moses. The "Christ" can save the Jews. (Indeed the Inner Christ-Ideal was just the best in Judaism.)

56.

JOHN 6.

Christ the Bread.

Here we get the origin of the story of the feeding of the 5,000. The material came from 2 Kings 4, 42—44, even to the barley loaves and the pieces left over (John 6, 9, 12). Several of the stories of the Christ set forth the Life of the Spirit as doing marvels equal to those of Elijah and Elisha, e.g., healing the leper, raising the dead, ascending to heaven: and so here feeding the multitudes with a few loaves. Such stories clearly are not history. The Christ-Ideal can feed myriads of souls. John 6, 1—63 has a reference to the Eucharist,²⁷ but contradicts the

(27) Cp. *The Jewish Story of Jeschu*, in the Talmud: translated into English by Foote and Wheeler, tells a merely imaginary tale of Jesus (against the Christians), but illustrates this point.

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view of those literalists²⁸ who sought Christ's "flesh." See verse 63. If men could have Christ's flesh it would be useless to them.

57.

JOHN 7, 53—8, 11.

The Adulterous Woman.

The story is a mystic one, to show the opposition between legalism and idealism, law and love. On the stoning of (some) adulteresses see Deut. 22, 23. The betrothed woman was accounted to be practically married. Jesus (in the story) does not condone her sin. He calls it sin (v. 11), but he does not seek to have harm done to her. The Christ-spirit is against the *lex talionis*, which is at the basis of the criminal law. If A kills B, why should C, D, E and F (called the "State") kill A? It is a state-murder in reality. "Condemn not" (to punishment)—Luke 6, 27—38; Matt. 7, 1—5; 1 Corin. 6, 1—7; Rom. 12, 19—21. (Rom. 13, 1—7, is really not upholding the State's punishments by force, but telling Christians not to resist them by force. The State is pagan largely and knows not the spiritual forces to use to evil men.)

58.

JOHN 8, 12—59.

Against the Pharisees.

There is no doubt that the early Christ-group

(28) If a man Jesus lived, and reclined by a table at a "last Supper," the disciples could not have thought his words "This is my body" were to be taken literally of the bread, for they saw his body. If Jesus was not a man the words again do not refer to a literal body.

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within Judaism was opposed by the representatives²⁹ of formalism and legalism and ceremonialism, and were persecuted and rejected. But the tendency in Christian writings was to make out a case against *all* the Jews generally : so here, verse 44.

59.

JOHN 9.

The Man born Blind.

This man is a symbol of the Gentiles. Not only can Christ heal the Jews and Samaritans, but the Gentiles also. They were born blind, *i.e.*, have never had the spiritual light. That the sight referred to here is spiritual is clear from verses 39, 40, where the Pharisees say : “Are we also blind?” So the healing was not history. It was a parable of the Christ’s power, re-set as if a miracle had happened. See 10, 16, on Christ for the Gentiles. The Inner Ideal Life can save all men.

60.

JOHN 11.

Lazarus Raised.

The key to this story is in verses 25, 26. “I am the Resurrection and the Life.” That this meant a present, *spiritual* resurrection, a Gnostic resurrection from sin and evil, is also clear from John 5, 21—25 : cp. Ephes. 2, 6. The editor of

(29) Many Pharisees were noble men but many were self-righteous at this period.

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the story enlarged on it in 12, 1—11, as if it were history. See Moffatt's *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, p. 539.

The Fourth Gospel has a layer of spiritual parables of the Logos, used and overlaid by a cruder orthodox view of the Christ as if he had been a kind of man on earth once. The task of our age is to get behind the New Testament to the Gnostic origins of the Figure of the Christ, as the ever descending and ascending God.

61.

JOHN 21, 1—13.

The Fishermen.

The whole account of the early Christians as fishermen is founded on a misconception of the simile of them as “fishers of men.” Here is a parable of what they would do, viz., win the Gentiles to the Christ-life. The figure 153 is taken from 2 Chronicles 2, 17, and referred (symbolically) to the Gentiles. “Solomon numbered all the strangers that were in the land of Israel—and there were found 153,600.” (See section 91, for John 14—17.)

62.

MATT. 19, 1—12.

On Divorce.

These verses reflect a conversation among Christians on the views of the Rabbis. Rabbi Hillel, who lived about A.D.20, allowed divorce (it seems) if a man saw a more beautiful woman.

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Rabbi Shammai was more strict, and the Christians sided with him.

They harked back to Genesis 2, 24, which spoke of a woman leaving her parents and going to her husband. But this does not bear on divorce really. It is a matter of fact. Legal rules are ever behind life. Public opinion is in advance of laws, and demands to be expressed in fresh laws.

Conditions of life are different *now* from the days of the early Christians. Then a woman (1) received but little education, and (2) was regarded as the subordinate of the husband. This latter is reflected in the New Testament, see e.g., Ephes. 5, 22, and is the Eastern view. To-day women have changed, and more opportunities for divorce are needed to give them a full life of service. The State's care should be that all children are well provided for, in case husband and wife desire to separate and be free.

Christianity does not view the relation of the sexes in marriage as existing only to satisfy a desire for fertility : for see 1 Corin. 7, 1—7. But modern thought rightly condemns the indulgence of appetite (1) in such a way as to bring into the world children that are not desired ; (2) before marriage, for chastity *is* possible, as millions have proved, possible and healthy too ; while the loss of it brings endless evils, both moral and physical. See 1 Cor. 6, 12; 9, 27. Celibacy was advised in the New Testament because the Parousia ("presence" of Christ) was expected soon. See 1 Cor. 7, 29—32, 39, 40. That was a piece of "interimsethic," concerning a rule of external conduct, but the *principles* in the

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Sermon on the Mount are external moral laws, and not "interimsethic."

63.

MATT. 19, 16—30.

The Rich Young Ruler.

According to the ordinary commentaries, which till now have assumed (not proved) there was a man Jesus, this young man was told to sell all, either :

- (a) So that he could literally follow Jesus about Palestine, or
- (b) Because, in his love of money, he needed this self-discipline, or
- (c) Because the "end of the age" was near, and "in the new order there would be no need of wealth" (so Montefiore). But
 - (a) Is excluded because a man could keep his wealth, and yet follow Jesus, leaving someone to manage it,
 - (b) Is not true, for to "sell all" was applied to *all* Christians in Luke 12, 33; 6, 24; 14, 33 ("renounce all that he has.")
 - (c) Is beside the point, for if this new era was at hand, it would not matter if a man kept his wealth : all would soon be equally well off.

From our standpoint of there being no man Jesus, but a Christ-group who called their felt Ideal "Christ," this story becomes clear.

It is a work of art, a composition to indicate the relation of Christianity to Judaism. A Jew

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becoming a Christian needed to be ready (anyhow) to share his wealth. See Acts 2, 44—46; 4, 34—37; and cp. Ananias, who only pretended to so share his wealth in a time of need. Acts 5, 1—5.

This is hinted at in Matt. 19, 27—30. Peter had “left all.” No doubt the early Christians were boycotted by their relatives for joining the new Christ-group, a “suspect” set of Jews at first.

Some think the “wealth” in this story is the knowledge of God. But it is a wealth which had to be given up, not the glad teaching of truth. It is literal wealth, for see verses 25 and 29.

As to verse 17 “Why do you ask me about what is good?” This in Mark (earliest) is “Why callest thou me good?” But Mark would never have meant to say that Jesus was not good. See Mark 14, 61—62; 15, 39, 56—61; 16, 14—39.

Some confusion has arisen in Mark, which was copied by Luke. But Matthew makes an attempt to correct it. For another confusion in Mark, see 14, 65: “Say unto Him, Prophesy”—prophesy what? one cannot but ask. Matthew explains it to mean “prophesy who is it that struck thee.”

In our passage the rich man really was asking about the good life. Matthew, though using and altering Mark, may be really nearer the original meaning in verse 17.

Some rich Jew had asked the Christ-group what was their gospel, how should a man act to gain eternal life? The reply was: keep the decalogue, but more, join the new Love-group

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of spiritually-minded men and women, the earnest of the Kingdom of God (Luke 17, 21) : but to do so you must be ready to share your wealth. The Jew retired troubled.

There may have been a particular rich Jew who so came to the Christians, or the story may be typical to show what a rich Jew needed to do. In either case Isaiah 58, 17 may have influenced the story as here told. The idea that only God is good came from Gnosticism.

64.

MATT. 20, 1—16.

Parable of the Labourers.

This parable is only in Matthew. The denarion=about 9½d. The 12th hour=6.0 p.m.

The parable was intended to teach that the eternal life is the result of grace rather than of work. God, in His grace, will grant this one, great, priceless boon to a number of persons, who, looked at from merely a business standpoint, should be rewarded most unequally. "In the kingdom all are on equal footing" (Montefiore).

There is a parallel in the Jewish Talmud to illustrate how a Rabbi "in 28 years wrought more in learning the law than many scholars in 100 years."

It is evident this parable was not by a teacher at the beginning of Christianity, for it implies that some became Christians years later than the first Christians. They expected the Christ soon to come. Would all be rewarded alike? some asked. Yes, is the reply, for all will enjoy God for ever.

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65.

MATT. 20, 17—28.

On Humility.

Verse 17 is the “framework” of the mystic story.

Verses 18, 19 are a summary of the cross-drama, put into the mouth of “Jesus,” as all the Logia were. The “cup” belonged to all true Christians. This shows that the cross was not a wooden one, but a life-principle, which could be shared (see Ephes. 2, 20 : Philip 3, 10). The passage implies that persecution had been felt. Montefiore says “the whole passage in its present form is *later* than Jesus.” We are finding that the whole of the Gospels is “*later*,” i.e., there was no man Jesus, but a Community who felt and taught the inner goodwill as the will of God and made light of ceremonies and ritual, in consequence. Christianity arose in a group of spiritually-minded Essenes called Nazarenes, a Gnostic sect of Jews.

66.

MATT. 20, 29—34.

Two (?) Blind Men.

Jericho is about 15 miles from Jerusalem. Matthew has two blind men; Mark and Luke one, viz., Bartimæus.

“Bartimæus”=son of Timæus (query if Timæus=blindness). The story is a reduplication of Matthew 9, 27 (cp. “Son of David” in both). The idea is that Christ (the Life-giving Ideal) gives light in the soul. Isaiah 35, 5—6 is

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of spiritual light. John 9, 39—41, shows John 9 is a story of spiritual light, an allegory. The “ throwing away ” of the man’s garment (Mark 10, 50) means the casting aside of old sinful or legal prejudice (blindness). The whole is symbolic. M. Loisy tends to regard it so.

67.

MATT. 21, 1—17.

Entry into Jerusalem.

This is a symbolic story, the material coming from Zechariah 9, 9—10 : Psalm 118, 25; 8, 2. (Greek version as to “ out of the mouth of babes, etc.”).

This is one of the passages which show most clearly that the stories of Jesus were largely compositions from a “ Messianic ” list of texts. That the Jews regarded many passages in the Old Testament as referring to the Messiah, though originally some of them had no such meaning is clear from Edersheim’s *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, II. Appendix 9. Many references, there, are of later Rabbinical views, but show how freely the Old Testament was used. The figure of the “Christ” was in the minds of the Jews in times B.C., and especially after *The Book of Enoch* (similitudes, B.C.70) was written. It indicated Christ as *already* existing as the Son of Man in heaven, and about to come as the Judge of Men. The idea that the Christ had already had an episode on earth arose from Gnosticism, which synthesised the heavenly Christ of *The Book of Enoch* with the Gnostic Logos-Saviour.

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J. Weiss regards the story of the Entry of Jesus as, in many ways, unhistorical. Schweitzer otherwise. Its exact following of Zech. 9, 9—10 is not to be disregarded. For a man Jesus to act the prophecy out in detail (as Schweitzer thinks) is too absurd! Where would the spontaneity or originality of any great man be, if he thus acted a part set to him?

While the story is taken as that of a man Jesus, there is no reasonable explanation of it. Taken as a work of art on an ideal Figure, as all the rest of the stories are, it becomes clear. The Messiah, the Ideal Life, is lowly, riding on an ass, not on a war-horse. His power is gentle yet efficient, as Love ever is. Love uses not the war-horse.

68.

MATT. 21, 18—22.

The Fig-tree Cursed.

Taken literally as history, this story has no moral value: rather the reverse.

The original is Luke 13, 6—9 who used a better form of the *Logia* here, as so often (even though the Gospel itself was later than Matthew in composition probably).

The parable became a miracle, as in the case of the feeding of the 5,000 and the turning of water into wine.

69.

MATT. 21, 23—32.

John the Baptist again.

What view did the Jews take of the baptism by "John the Baptist"? This question was

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put into the form of this story. The “ baptism of John ” was not by a man John. It was merely a baptism indicating repentance, and was found among some later Jews—see Acts 18, 25. Apollos knew only such a baptism before Aquila and Priscilla instructed him further in the spiritual baptism. The story is a confusion.³⁰ If John lived as a man, why should not the priests and elders have recognised John as a prophet, who preached repentance? The story of the two sons condemns the self-righteous formalists.

70.

MATT. 21, 33—46.

Parable of the Vineyard.

If a man Jesus spake these words *before* he was crucified, they are indeed hard to understand. The parable implies that the Son (of God) *had* been killed. They gave a doctrine of the Church, viz., that the Jewish rejection of their Christ-life (as taught by the earliest Christians) was a following on and climax to all their persecutions to the prophets whom God sent to them. The material of the parable is from Isaiah 5, 1. Jewish writers often try to make light of the rejection of Christianity by the Jews. They assert, e.g., that Pilate, not the Jews, crucified Jesus. But who tried Jesus and who cried “Crucify him,” according to the story? See also Romans, chaps. 9—11. The Sanhedrin excommunicated the Christ-sect. See John 9, 22 : 12, 42 : 16, 2, in Moffatt’s Translation.

(30) See Montefiore, *Synoptic Gospels*, 1, 276.

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Had the Jewish Sanhedrin accepted the Christ-group, there would not have been a separate Christian Church.

[On Matthew 22, 1—14; the Messianic Feast, see on Luke, above. “The more original form is in Luke” (Montefiore). The “robe of righteousness” was a Gnostic phrase.]

71.

MATT. 22, 15—22.

Tribute to Cæsar.

Coins belong to Cæsar, hearts belong to God. The silver denarius is the “penny” here (worth about 8½d., in 1913). The Christ-group’s answer here is not original, nor is it profound. Not original, for “the bulk of the Pharisees took much the same line.”³¹ They would not revolt by force against the Roman rule (see Romans 13, 1—7). There is a limit to obedience to State rule (Acts 5, 27—29). The answer is not profound, for the Moral Ideal must rule the State also.

72.

MATT. 22, 23—33.

The Resurrection Puzzle.

The questions in this chapter were probably often discussed between Nazarenes³² (Christians)

(31) Montefiore, 1, 280.

(32) This seems to have been the earliest name of the Christ-group which arose from the Essenes and Ebionites.

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and orthodox Jews. They are not very profound, but rather of a Rabbinical nature. The saying in this story is not original. A Jewish writing declares : “ Rab used to say, ‘ in the world to come there is no eating or drinking or marrying ’.”³³

The Christian Community thus simply sided with one current view of the matter, as they did concerning tribute to Cæsar. So on the prohibition of divorce (except for sin), they sided with Shammai as against Hillel. These sayings (*Logia*) were not new and infallible utterances of the Eternal Logos once incarnate. They were the Inner Ideal in Judaism. The declaration here in verses 31, 32 is rather “ fanciful,”³⁴ for it assumes God is a God of the living, and so Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were alive ! (It is probable that these men never lived, but were the eponymous ancestors of the Jews, tribes described as individuals.³⁵)

The whole doctrine of a future rising-up of bodies buried in the ground was Jewish, and is now an impossible one for scientific men. We know the bodies have long since gone to dust, and those drowned in the sea have been eaten by fishes. Man does not need such bodies for a future life, if the aspiring soul be an aspect of God, with “ vibration-energies ” finer than the body that dies.

(33) Montefiore, 1, 285, quoting Berachoth 17a, and adding : “ This was the official doctrine.”

(34) *Ibid.*

(35) See Dr. Bennett on *Genesis* (Century Bible).

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73.

MATT. 22, 34—40.

The Chief Commandments.

This story cites Deut. 6, 5, and Levit. 19, 18. The idea was not new. *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* told the Jews to love God and one's fellow men.³⁶ In the Epistles we find the latter law as summing up the moral code : Rom. 13, 8—10 ; Galat. 5, 14. Had a man Jesus taught the passage in Matt. 22, 37, 38, why did not the writers of Romans and Galatians appeal to Jesus as their final authority? The Epistles were prior, and gave the sayings of the Church.

74.

MATT. 22, 41—46.

A Puzzle as to the Messiah.

Here is a Rabbinical sophistry. Psalm 110 was not by David, but if it were, and it referred to the Messiah, the doctrinal point is that the Messiah was a *divine* being, greater than David. Such was the Church doctrine (Philip 2, 5—10; 1 Cor. 8, 6; Colos. 1, 15—17), and the story is of a discussion between Christians and Scribes.

75.

MATT. 23, 1—39.

The Worst Kind of Pharisee.

The teaching of the Pharisees could often be good, and ought to be obeyed (23, 3), but their

(36) *The Testament of Issacher.*

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spirit was often proud, legal, self-righteous, bigoted and unloving. They only “appeared righteous.” This fact it was which called up the new faith, declaring an inner spirit as the will of the Christ (Matt. 5, 20).

Christ is here spoken of in the third person (verses 8, 10). Teachers had arisen in the Church (cp. 1 Corin. 12, 10, 29). The passage is by the Church, not by a man Jesus at the beginning of Christianity. The “woes” given here are sorrowful, not revengeful. The Church (or earlier the Community) was the “body” of Christ, His vehicle, His mouthpiece (Ephes. 1, 23; 4, 12, 16; 5, 30; Colos. 1, 18, 24; 1 Corin. 12, 27).

The Church had the power of “binding and loosing” (Matt. 18, 18), *i.e.*, of forbidding or allowing certain actions. The Church consists of all who obey the Christ-Ideal (Mark 3, 35), for they are “crucified” to the “old man” (Gal. 5, 24; 6, 14; Colos. 3, 1—10) of the self-seeking will.

The Ideal is a state of heart, a spirit, a kind of life, a quality of soul. This was set out in the Sermon on the Mount. Since then, some more aspects have been added (open-mindedness, imagination, freedom). We now approach to a fuller vision than the New Testament gives, both of the Ideal and of God, whose will the Ideal is. So we approach a World-Religion, which now is dawning, a spirit richer than any which the old religions gave to the world, but which could not have come but for them.

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76.

MATT. 23, 37—39.

“O Jerusalem!”

No doubt the Christians regarded the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 as a punishment of God upon the Jews for their rejection of the Christ-group (Luke 13, 6—9; 19, 41—44). Verse 38 “desolate” implies that this event had occurred : see 24, 15—21; Luke 21, 20—24. But some of the Jews had long been rebelling against the Roman rule, and the coming of Titus was not brought in by the Jewish persecution of the Christians.

77.

MATT. 24, 1—44.

The Messianic Coming.

Mr. Montefiore says : “This apocalyptic oration is, as a whole, certainly unauthentic. Much of it is built up upon the *familiar* lines of Jewish apocalypses from Daniel (164 B.C.) onwards.” Verse 15, “the appalling horror,” spoken of by Daniel (9, 27; 11, 31; 12, 11) was a reference to a little altar and statue of Zeus set up by Antiochus Epiphanes IV. on the altar in the temple at Jerusalem, B.C. 164. This “horror” would be repeated, it is here said, *i.e.*, the Roman Emperor’s image would be set up.

If these verses were falsely ascribed to a man Jesus, and likewise the discourses of the Fourth Gospel, and those of the Gnostic *Pistis Sophia* also (2nd century), why could not *all* the *Logia* in the Synoptics be falsely ascribed? With the

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miracles as parables re-set, and the Crucifixion-story as part of a drama of initiation, and the Infancy-stories as works of art, there will soon be very little left for those who cling to the idea of a man Jesus. But art is better than history, and the unveiling of God is nobler than the life of one God-man, whose finite thoughts follow one another, and whose knowledge must be very inadequate. It is God Himself that the world is really seeking, and to have a man Jesus is not the deepest longing of souls. Indeed, it has become a hindrance to religion.

78.

MATT. 25, 1—13.

The Parable of the Maidens.

A parable “made up to suit the moral, and full of inconsistencies and awkwardnesses.” How could shops be open after midnight, or a bride need bridesmaids at that time? If the moral be “Watch” (13) why did *all* the maidens go to sleep? It was lack of oil, not sleep, that kept five foolish maidens from going in to the feast.

79.

MATT. 25, 14—30.

The Parable of the Talents.

See Luke 19, 11—27, on the pounds. A talent = £240. The parable seems founded on the idea that Christ “gave gifts” to men (Eph. 4, 8—12, and cp. 1 Corin. 11, 28). The Christ *will* come and cast any unprofitable servant into “outer darkness” (30). The parable was probably of

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Jewish origin (the Rabbis taught many such, as
Edersheim³⁷ has shown) and was used and
adapted by Christians.

80.

MATT. 25, 31—46.

The Judgment by Christ.

See 2 Corin. 5, 10; 1 John 5, 12; 1 Peter 1, 17;
John 5, 20, 30. Christ was the coming Judge
from heaven, as *The Book of Enoch* had set
forth, and indeed verse 31 is a quotation from
that book, which frequently has the phrase “The
Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory”
(45, 3; 54, 4; 62, 3, 5).

Here is another indication that the Gospel
Sayings are not a history of what was spoken by
a man Jesus. The probabilities are that parts
of these sayings were originally in poetical form,
or at least, in Hebrew parallelism; Dr. Moffatt’s
Translation gives many passages in English-prose-
poetry, though not all of these were in Greek or
Hebrew poetical form: but some probably were.
Dr. Burney has argued that *the parable of the
Last Judgment* in Matt. 25, 31—46, was originally
in Hebrew poetical form. The Old Testament
has a great many poetical parallelisms,
especially in its prophetical writings—in Lamen-
tations and the Psalms, as “I made the earth,
and man upon it I created,” or “Her hand to
the tent-peg she stretched forth, and her right
hand to the workman’s mallet” (Judges 5, 26):
cp. Zech 9, 9. “Riding upon an ass, even upon
a colt,” which passage is wrongly used in

(37) *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*: 2. 283—297.

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Matthew, as if two animals were intended. Dr. C. F. Burney says : " It is an interesting fact that if the parable of the Last Judgment is translated into Biblical Hebrew it falls immediately into a rhythmical form, quite as regular and striking as the forms which are found in the Old Testament prophetical and poetical books. Even the English suggests this, as in the words :

" Hungry was I, and ye fed me,
Thirsty was I, and ye relieved me ;
A stranger was I, and ye housed me ;
 Naked, and ye clothed me.
Sick was I and ye visited me ;
In prison was I and ye came to me."

Dr. Burney suggests that poetry was a " new medium " by which Jesus conveyed truth, and such a method was used by Hebrew prophets. But surely the *writings* of the prophets was not the form of their burning popular speeches. Their writings involved art and composition. And the poetical forms in the sayings in the Gospels involved artistic composition, viz., that of the spiritually-minded Christians who composed the poetical passages. Such a writer here seems to have used the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (Joseph 1, 5—6) which says :

" I was sick and the Lord visited me :
I was in prison and the Lord showed favour unto me."

The meaning of the parable is not that Christ will reward anyone who helps anyone, but will reward those who help Christians. It is thus clearly a production of the Church, calling for men to help needy Christians. The phrase " These my brethren, even the least " does not refer to any poor people, but to Christians who were in poverty, sickness, or put into prison.

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The parable was composed, then, after Christians had been put into prison. No Jesus spake it.

Being poetry and implying that some Christians had been imprisoned, and using "Christ" in the third person (verses 31, 34, 40), it could not be by a man Jesus. Thus it falls in line with all the other parables. They were productions of the Church using Jewish material and Rabbinical sayings.⁴⁰

81.

MATT. 26, 1—16.

Judas.

When the worshippers of Dionysus were persecuted, it was said that Dionysus was persecuted, though he did not live as a person.³⁸

When the priests of Attis were self-mutilated it was said that Attis was mutilated.³⁹ So, when the members of the Christ-group were rejected, by the Sanhedrin, it was said that Christ was rejected and crucified. Judas was a name composed for the Judaism by which the Christians (being Jews) came under the authority of the Sanhedrin. They were then "excommunicated,"⁴¹ cast out of Judaism, and

(40) Even in the Synoptic Gospels, "Jesus" is One who was in many places at once (Matt. 18, 20). He was the Son of God, greater than Solomon, Moses, Jonah, He was the Disposer of all souls! No man (whose thoughts follow one another) could be all that. "Jesus" is God in men.

(38) See *Ency. Brit.*, art. "Dionysus."

(39) See Frazer, *Golden Bough*: "Adonis, Attis, Osiris," 1, 265.

(41) See Moffatt's *Translation of the New Testament*: John 12, 42: 18.2: 9.22.

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thus were persecuted by Paul (as Saul) and others, and became a distinct "risen" Church in time (Acts 8, 1—4 : 12, 1—2 : 26, 10—11).

The materials for the Judas story are from Zech. 11, 12—13 : Ps. 41, 9 : Prov. 26, 6.

The story here of the alabaster box of ointment is another version of Luke 7, 36—50. Mr. Montefiore says : "How much of it is historical is dubious." It implies that the death was certain. It is an allegory of Christ (the God-Ideal for men and in men) recognised as divine by the outcast Jews, and by the Gentiles, here symbolised as a "sinner" (cp. Galat. 2, 15—17). As often in Jewish thought, a woman typified a people (Zech. 9, 9). The word "gospel" in verse 9 implies there was a set Christian message. It is probable that the initiate into Christianity was anointed, and these verses tell of this act.

82.

MATT. 26, 17—29.

The Last Supper.

Mithras was said to have held a last supper with his disciples and the sun, ere he ascended back to heaven.⁴² Justin saw many likenesses between that supper as a memorial ritual in Mithraism when bread and water (or wine) were partaken of, and the Christian supper.⁴³ But

(42) F. Cumont : *The Mysteries of Mithra.*

(43) Justin : *Apology*, 1, 66. As to the bread and the cup, "the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras commanding the same thing to be done."

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Mithraism was much older than Christianity. So the Christian mystic meal was the earlier agapé transformed by Gnosticism. Thus 1 Corin. 10, 16—21 the Christian meal is likened to the pagan meals. Probably the Christian meal grew out of a simpler agapé or love-feast, derived from the Essenes. The Therapeutæ also⁴⁴ had a common meal of bread and water. When Gnosticism (A.D. 30—80) had made Christianity as a new moral mystery-religion, the agapé was the mystic “eating of the God,” as in Mithraism : the “God” here in Christianity being “Jesus Christ.” At most, the Eucharist is a symbol of the crucified life, but more and more people feel it is unessential, when once they grasp that crucified life. To “feed on Christ” is to feed on the Ideal which is God’s will for men. “Christ” means the MAN in men, the divine spiritual ideal evolved in men as their true life, and still being evolved.

83.

MATT. 26, 30—56.

*Gethsemane.*⁴⁵

Peter’s denial was a story based on the historical view of the Petrine School (1 Corin. 1, 12 : 3, 22), that the Christ was not to be a sufferer, but a king.

(44) See Philo, *On the Contemplative Life*.

(45) The name is a composition to suit the Messiah, like Golgotha, Nazareth. It means “wine-press of the olives.” It was coined from Isaiah 63, 2, 3, “I have trodden the wine-press alone.”

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The “cock-crowing” is a confusion with Mark 13, 34—37, “cock-crowing” being merely a phrase for a period of time in the night—3.0 a.m. Perhaps Peter is described as the “door-keeper” (porter) in Mark 13, 34 because he “held the keys” (Matthew 16, 19).

For the *materials* for the story of Gethsemane, see Isaiah 51, 17—22 : 63, 1—3.

For the *fact* that the Old Testament was drawn upon to compose the story, see Matthew 26, 24—56, which Dr. Moffatt thus translates :

“The Son of Man goes the road that the Scripture has described for him. . . . All this happened for the fulfilment of the prophetic Scriptures.” It is plain whence came the substance of the stories.

No reporter heard the words of Christ in the Garden. The story is not history, then, but it is better. It is a work of art to show that the initiate must face loneliness, must die to the “world” (Galat. 5, 24), and that “all who want to live the religious life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3, 12 in Moffatt’s Translation). The story is part of the initiation-mystery, which seems to the present writer to not only embrace the Passion-drama, but also other parts of Mark’s Gospel (copied by Matthew and Luke).

Mark used the *Logia* in some parables and sayings (Mark 4, 1—34 : 7, 1—23 : 8, 27—38). If the passages from the *Logia* be removed, there

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seems to be an Ur-Marcus, which simply was a text-book of initiation ritual for the beginner in the Christian life, or the 12 stages of initiation. The stories of what "Christ" did are really of what the Christians did, quite in the Eastern custom of "praxis" then. For the kiss (49) see 2 Sam. 20, 9: Prov. 27, 6 (R.V.). Matthew's Greek word for kiss means "kissed abundantly," so that Prov. 27, 6, seems to be the source of the imagery used here: ("The kisses of an enemy are profuse.").

The incident of the young man in Mark 14, 51, 52 is from Amos 2, 16. Mr. Montefiore says: "The Messianic interpretation of Amos 2, 16 may have suggested the entire incident." The passage runs: "He that is of firm heart among the heroes shall flee away naked in that day."

But the idea of the linen garment seems to be a Gnostic one—for in the mysteries linen garments were used—so that the story may be symbolic, using the Amos passage as material to set forth a symbol. And such is the Passion-story throughout, a mystery drama,⁴⁶ but using "Messianic" material for its expression. So "the disciples fled," because of Zech. 14, 4—5.

For the heavenly army ready to help Jesus, compare 2 Kings 6, 17, in the Elisha legends. Many stories of the Christ take material from the Elijah and Elisha stories: cp. 2 Kings 4, 42—44.

(46) See J. M. Robertson: *Pagan Christs*, pp. 194—204 on the Passion-story.

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84.

MATT. 26, 57—75.

In the House of Caiaphas.

Peter was not inside the hall, so no Christian heard the conversation between Jesus and Caiaphas. The story is thus a composition. The "trial" was in many respects illegal, and could not have been history.

Thus, Rev. Dr. Isaac M. Wise tells us that :

" It was prohibited not only to execute a criminal on Sabbath, or a fast-day but also to open his trial on Friday, or the eve of a holiday, because, if found guilty, he could not be executed the next day.⁴⁷

" Mark (14, 53) maintains that when Jesus arrived in the high-priest's palace, all the priests met there of whom there could not have been less than 200,000."⁴⁸

" The whole trial from beginning to end is contrary to Jewish law and custom as in force at the time of Jesus. No court of justice, with jurisdiction in penal cases, could or ever did hold its session in the palace of the high-priest. There were three legal bodies in Jerusalem to decide penal cases : the Great Sanhedrin of 71 members, and two Minor Sanhedrin each of 23

(47) *The Martyrdom of Jesus of Nazareth*, 1874, Washington, p. 19. Rabbi Wise's authority is Maimonides, and Mishna *Sanhedrin*, which was not written till c. 200 A.D., but " contains tradition dating back to pre-Christian times. The Gospel account of the Trial of Jesus does not represent facts " (Friedlander).

(48) p. 62.

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members. The court of priests had no penal jurisdiction except in the affairs of the temple service, and then over priests and Levites only. The Great Sanhedrin held its sessions in a hall called "Lishhath Haggazith" (the hall of hewn stone) No court of justice in Israel was permitted to open its sessions at night, and in cases of capital crime, no session could be extended after the evening hour (*Mishnah Sanhedrin IV. 1*). . . . A court convoked and acting in rebellion to law and custom can be considered only as a band of rebels. What use have such men of witnesses. . . . The judges went about at midnight in a populous city to produce false witnesses (!) Such is the fictitious character of Mark's nightly trial. Mark also forgot the Jewish law concerning false witnesses (*Duet. 19, 16*). . . . Maimonides shows how rigidly this part of the laws was enforced. . . . The point at issue according to Mark was blasphemy. . . . The mistakes in this point are numerous and obvious. If (as here) none of the judges defend the culprit, the verdict of guilty was invalid. . . . Again, had Jesus maintained before a body of Jewish lawyers to be the Son of God, they could not have found him guilty of blasphemy, because every Israelite had a perfect right to call himself a son of God (*Duet. 14, 1*). . . . The whole trial must be given up as a transparent and unskilled invention of a Gentile Christian of the second⁴⁹ century, who knew nothing of Jewish law and custom.⁵⁰

(49) The invention of the story may surely have been earlier, and by Jewish Gnostics in Alexandria perhaps, after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

(50) pp. 66—78.

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[As a mystery-drama of the Christ-Logos, composed for initiates into the “ crucified ” life, and emanating from Alexandrian Gnostics the story is clear. It is not history, but it came to be regarded as history.]

Further :

“ The conduct of Pilate, according to the Gospels, was so entirely averse to his character, as described by Josephus and Philo, that it is incredible on this ground alone : and if Pilate was weak and foolish enough to yield to a clamouring crowd, why did he impose upon him the very worst and most cruel punishment of the Roman law — crucifixion . . . and why did he have Jesus scourged,⁵¹ which the clamouring crowd did not demand? ”

“ If it is not true that Jesus was scourged and crucified, then the whole story is a dogmatic legend, written for the purpose either of dramatic effect in the religious mysteries, or of vilifying the Jews and flattering the Romans.”

“ There are a number of arguments in favour of the allegation that the early Christian teachers adopted the cross, and the crucifixion story on account of the cross, for dogmatic purposes. One of these arguments is the symbolic significance of the cross in pre-Christian times : see, e.g., Ezekiel 9, 4—6, on the letter Tau T (600 B.C.). . . . The crucifixion story came from abroad and was told with the avowed intention of incriminating the Jews.”⁵²

(51) This story arose from Isaiah, 50.6.

(52) Why? Surely because they *had* persecuted the earliest Christians. Christianity arose amid the opposition of scribal formalism to the ethical inner righteousness as taught by the Christ-group (Matt. 5.20).

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The quotations from the Old Testament used in the Passion-story are from the Greek Septuagint Version, e.g., Luke 23, 30, from Hosea 10, 8. The story was not by a Jewish Rabbinical writer, but proceeded from Alexandrian Gnostic mystics (Hellenistic Jews).

Mr. J. M. Robertson in "Pagan Christs" (pp. 197—206) says :

" From Matthew 26, 17 or 20, the narrative is simply a presentment of a dramatic action and dialogue. The events are huddled one upon another exactly as happens in all drama. Jesus partakes with his disciples of the Passover, an evening meal . . . they sing a hymn, and proceed in the darkness to the Mount of Olives. Not a word is said of what happened or was said on the way : the scene is simply changed to the Mount. . . . What we are reading is the bare transcript of a primitive play. . . . Jesus prays while his disciples sleep. There is thus no one present or awake to record his words. The action goes on through the night when as Renan notes . . . an Eastern city is as if dead. . . . The mock crowning and robing are strictly dramatic. . . . The resurrection scene is wholly staged. . . . The scene of the Transfiguration, too, has every appearance of having been a dramatic representation in the manner of the pagan mysteries."

The spitting and scourging came from Isaiah 50, 6. It was what "must have happened" to the Messiah ! Even McNeile says on verse 68 :

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“The evangelists probably had Isaiah (50, 6) in mind.”

For the Peter story, see above on 26, 30—56.

85.

MATT. 27, 1—10.

The Fate of Judas.

On verses 3—10. Montefiore says “these are in all probability completely legendary. The basis is a mistranslated passage in Zechariah 11, 12, 13.”

In that passage⁵³ are two variant readings, one is “treasury,” the other is “potter.” Both readings are used in this story, showing clearly that it is a composition from the supposed Messianic text in Zechariah. So with Zech. 9, 9—10 : Psalm 22, 1, 18. There was no man Judas (see on Matt. 26, 1—16).

86.

MATT. 27, 11—31.

Pilate and Barabbas.

Mr. Montefiore calls both the trial before Caiaphas and the trial before Pilate “hardly conceivable.”

Pilate is a lay figure. A man who washes his hands in public to declare his innocence, argues with the mob, and says to Jesus, “What is truth?” is not the cruel procurator of whom Josephus wrote. Moreover, there was no

(53) See R. V. margin.

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reporter present to record the conversations between Jesus and Pilate. The whole is an artistic production to relate the rejection of the Christ by both the Romans and the official Jews, the State Law and the State Church ! The initiation of the Christian involved that he died to the world, to the use of state force to get money, or to kill his enemies, and to the legalism of the Jewish State Church (Gal. 6, 14; 5, 24). Verse 14, the silence is from Isaiah 53, 7. "He opened not his mouth."

Barabbas is a figure inserted from the drama of the Jewish annual feast of Purim, which was a continuation of the Babylonian Sacaea. In the feast of Purim, a man represented Mordecai, and an effigy of Haman was hanged on the gibbet prepared for Mordecai. The same Greek word in the Septuagint is used for "gallows" in Esther 7, 10 as is used for the "tree" (rather gibbet) on which the Christ was hanged, according to Acts 5, 30 : 10, 39 : 13, 29 : 1 Pet. 2, 24 : cp. Gal. 3, 13.

From the Purim drama the idea of Barabbas came. The composer put in a symbolic scene to indicate the choice between Judaism and Christ, Barabbas meaning "Son of the Rabbi," and Christ being the "Son of the Father."

The mockings (verses 27—31) are taken from the mystery-religions, but using material from the supposed "Messianic" passage, Isaiah 50, 6. "I gave my back to the smiters : I hid not my face from spitting." The initiate in the mystery-religions was clad in a coloured robe and crowned and worshipped.

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87.

MATT. 27, 32—56.

The Crucifixion.

It is hardly likely any Roman procurator would write such a title as “The King of the Jews” (37). The story is symbolical, and the idea of it being in Greek, Latin and Hebrew means that all nations would acknowledge the Christ-spirit as king over their lives.

The rent veil (51) is symbolical as is explained in Ephes. 2, 14. The veil separated the Jews from the Court of the Gentiles in the Temple. The Christ-life does away with all such division. Cp. Heb. 9, 1—14 : 10, 19—20. Verse 42 is based on Wisdom 2, 18.

Verses 51—53 are not allowed to be historical by many conservative critics.

Verse 46 is from Ps. 22, 1.

Verse 35 is from Ps. 22, 18.

The story is mystic, symbolic, and built up from Old Testament passages deemed to be Messianic. But it consists of initiation scenes. Luke 23, 34, is a gloss, yet of great spiritual value. It is from Isaiah 53, 12.

88.

MATT. 27, 57—66.

The Burial.

“He made his grave with the rich,” said Isaiah 53, 9. Joseph of Arimathæa was a figure invented as a rich Jew who buried the Christ in a tomb.

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89.

MATT. 28, 1—15.

The Resurrection.

The Jews of that age believed that the body placed in the grave would rise again (see Daniel 12, 1—3 : Matthew 27, 52) and so the Christians of A.D.80-90, considered the “ man ” Jesus must have raised his body (by God’s help) from the grave ! Hence 1 Cor. 15 on this. The unscientific Jewish Christians wove doctrines very easily, from what they thought must have been “ true.” No critical research or enquiry would be made in those of abundant credulity !

Originally, the idea of the Christ having risen came from Gnostics. The idea of the Christ was synthesised with their Logos-Saviour the Primal MAN who descended, was (ever) “ crucified ” (or separated from, and yet in union with, the phenomenal world), and rose back to heaven carrying souls with him. But this was interpreted as if a man Jesus Christ had descended, died and risen (Philip 2, 5—8), and so the story arose and was decorated with the “ Messianic ” texts, as to what the Messiah must have done ! Various legends (28, 11—15) were soon added.

The resurrection of every soul crucified to the lower nature to the “ world,” is a great truth, but a spiritual one. It has nothing to do with a body rising up when in decay ! The resurrection is in *this* life, a resurrection now to the immortal Life of God, over which sin, sorrow

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and the death of the body have no power.
(Ephes. 2, 6 : Philip 3, 11).⁵⁴

90.

MATT. 28, 16—20.

The Commission.

The mountain (verse 16) shows the story is symbolic: cp. the Sermon “on the Mount,” also the Transfiguration, and the giving of the Law to Moses on a mountain (a place of elevated thoughts, used as symbol for such elevation of the soul).

The Church and its theology is apparent in 28, 19.

The Commission is an inward urge: as in Acts 13, 1—3. It has been felt by a Carey, a Livingstone, a Damien (who went to Molokai), and many a father who explained the way of holiness to his son.

Those who thus teach have God ever with them, for they express the very nature of things, the eternal moral law, which sooner or later, must prevail.

91.

JOHN 14—17.

Christ Coming Again.

These chapters are speeches put into the mouth of “Jesus,” just as other long speeches were

(54) “Spiritualistic” phenomena are often real and genuine, but they do not imply discarnate spirits. They may be caused by psychic or magnetic force from the sitters or the medium or both, in a séance.

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composed by the writer of *Pistis Sophia* (a Gnostic work of the second century) and attributed to Jesus. But really they give a mystic doctrine of the Christ "going away," so as to "come again," as the Holy Spirit in Christians (John 14, 18 : 16, 7—16).

What did this mean?

It referred to the initiate no longer "seeing" Christ merely as an Ideal, "after the flesh" (2 Corin. 5, 16), presented to the intellect, but now feeling Christ within as the very will of the initiate, the Divine Life welling up in the soul (John 4, 14). This was Christ "coming again" to be in the heart, and not only known as an idea (John 14, 17, 20).

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